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After the S.G.P.C. Elections

Dilemma for the Centre and the Akalis

K. S. Khosla

Both the Government of India and the Akali leaders in their game of manipulative politics have landed themselves in a mess from which they find it difficult to extricate themselves.

The government did well in not allowing the militants to hold a 'sarbat khalsa' at the Golden Temple on Diwali day—as no government worth its name can allow secessionist activity at any place—but the losses are more than the gains. This is not to suggest that 'sarbat khalsa' should have been allowed as that would have led to more losses. What one is concerned here with is the end result, whether one likes it or not.

The Panthic Committee, or for that matter the Khalistanis,

have on the rebound given notice to the Akali leaders from Mr. Surjit Singh Barnala to Mr. Parkash Badal that they are irrelevant. They have also refused to recognise the

have gone a step further by excommunicating Mr. Parkash Badal and Mr. Gurcharan Singh Tohra from the panth and removing the acting jathedar of the Akal Takht, Prof. Darshan

words, the militants have challenged all the three important institutions of the Sikhs, the Akal Takht, the SGPC and the Akali Dal (both factions).

The Confusion

But before taking up the confusion prevailing among the Akali leaders, it is important to study the tricky situation in which the government has landed itself. There is no gainsaying that the Centre encouraged the Longowal group led by Mr. Barnala to contest the election of the executive committee of SGPC at Anandpur Sahib on October 16. What happened on Diwali day is partly a reaction to the events at Anandpur Sahib. One fails to understand how

could Mr. Barnala win the gurdwara elections out of power when he could not win them in power.

There are several newspaper reports to the effect that he was encouraged by the powers that be to challenge the United Akali Dal and capture the SGPC management, if possible. Mr. Barnala was even assured full police protection in attending the election meeting, though he later complained bitterly that he was badly let down by the police as his men were assaulted and prevented from attending the election meeting called by the acting president of SGPC, Mr. Harinder Singh. The Barnala group held a parallel meeting and elected Mr. Harcharan Singh Hudiara as SGPC president. The UAD group elected Mr. Tohra as the president for the 15th consecutive time.

The government's "manoeuvring" from behind the scenes has boomeranged. Two sets of office-bearers of the executive committee to manage

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Plans to Shelve Delhi Polls

(by special Correspondent)

The elections to Delhi Metropolitan Council and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi are due in the Beginning of the next year. But in view of its recent performances elsewhere and in the situation in which it finds itself the Congress (I) apprehends that it might not do well in the elections. As it does not want to loose its control over the capital efforts are on to shelve them. As the five-year term of the metropolitan council cannot be extended and the four-year term of the municipal corporation has already been extended by the maximum period allowed—one year, a move is said to be on to move an amendment to the Delhi Administration Act 1966, in the forth coming Parliament session, converting the present metropolitan Council into an

"interim-mayor in council".

Mayor in Council

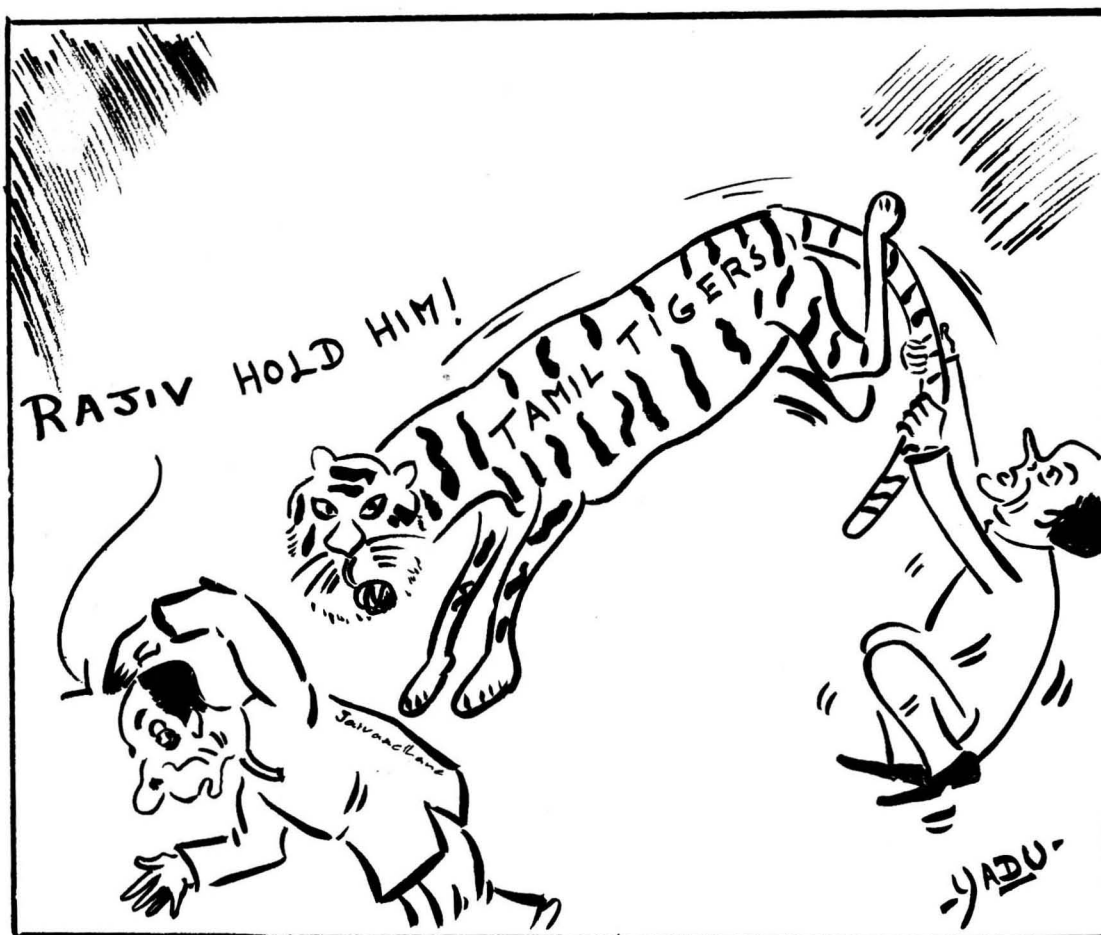
The bill would also include provisions to relegate the powers of the chairman, metropolitan council, to the mayor and abolish the posts of chief executive councillor and executive councillor, observers say.

The interim-mayor-in-council is expected to carry on till the general elections and the two civic bodies whose term will expire in February next year will be dissolved.

What has given currency to the possibility of the capital getting a new setup replace the council and the civic body is the fact that there has recently been a meeting of a highlevel committee comprising Central Ministers which was set up soon after the last parliamentary elections to go into the question whether Delhi should be given a new setup. It was the committee's first meeting.

There has also been much criticism of what is described as multiplicity of authorities in the capital affecting the pace of development. Even different authorities which are functioning simultaneously have been blaming one another for the failures. What is

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Recent Developement in Punjab

Wing Commd. R.S. Chhatwal

Since the Amritsar Convention of 4th Aug. 87, focussed by the departure of Prof. Darshan Singh, Acting Jathedar Sri Akal Takhat from Amritsar to Zirakpur on 10th Aug. 87, some positive indications have been observed with in the Sikhs to openly disapprove extremism. "Prof. Darshan Singh had assumed the religious office on the support of the militants, which made him look suspect in the eyes of the "peace loving and patriotic citizen". More apt would have been to say "Hindu Fundamantalist" but recent developments have proved that he is totally disillusioned. "At considerable risk to his life he is defying them (terrorists) says Hindustan Times on 2 Oct. "Under Sharpening Debate". Similiar sentiments are expressed by Times of India on 1 Oct under "A courageous stand". "Regardless of what his earlier role may have been Prof. Darshan Singh has risen in the esteem of every person who wants peace to return to Punjab". Statesman under "Panth in Disarray" on 4 Oct writes "It is possible that Mr. Darshan Singh's refusal to buckle under may mark the necessary, if belated, beginning of popular resistance to the messengers of terror". While acknowledging the courage of Prof. Darshan Singh Indian Express on 2 Oct under the way to peace writes "His (Prof. Darshan Singh) anxiety to avoid blood shed with in the precincts of the temple is under standable. The Tribune 2 Oct under "who speaks for the Panth" expresses about disillusion of Prof. Darshan Singh "Instead of influencing the young militants and luring to his line of thinking, Mr. Darshan Singh found himself echoing their thoughts and slogans". "Even today Mr. Darshan Singh is willing to speak out, but afraid to challenge that is understable. He is not prepared for an intra-religious clash which would result in shedding blood".

Call to Jathedar

Prof. Darshan Singh has made his stand clear against terrorists. He should now exert his authority as Jathedar Sri Akal Takhat, which he claims he has not yet relinquished. For this he will have to return to Amritsar. Hindustan Times on 2 Oct writes "If Prof. Darshan Singh returns to Golden Temple not as a sacrificial goat but to challenge to militants. Thous-ands of Sikhs should accompany him to make sure that he is not harmed" Times of India on 1 Oct also expresses similiar views "But sooner or later he (Prof. Darshan Singh) will have to assert his authority physically by assuming his duties at the Akal Takhat itself. But then he is probably waiting for further consolidation of Sikh opinion around him". The Tribune on 20 Oct also expresses similiar sentiments "the Sikhs of Punjab should intervene to create conditions which would facilitate the Akal Takhat's chief return to his office in Amritsar". Sikh masses are eagerly awaiting the return of Prof. Darshan Singh to Amritsar. But it appears his role in the Punjab politics is eclipsed for the present.

The Government interference in Sikh politics as well as religious bodies date back to British days. Ashok Mitra in the Telegraph 23 Sept writes. "The styategy that was then thought to be brilliant was to identify groups within the Akali and SGPC leadership and encourage them at the expense of other groups and leaders. but there is little novel in this strategy. It is the classic Principle of divide and rule the British were so adept at, and which Indira Gandhi had already involved. It has rebounded in Punjab". Suspecting that this will be repeated again the Statesman on 4th Oct writes "Mr. Buta Singh who had his own scores to settle with Mr. Darshan Singh and Jat leadership of the UAD, must resist the temptation to use the present confusion for narrow partisan ends". The Tribune on 2nd Oct also warns that "the Government should, however, not play a role in the process, nor should it seem to be playing role".

The Solutions

But for the peace in Punjab, what solutions are offered. Ashok Mitra in Telegraph of 23 Sept" we have now arrived at a point where all options appear to be ended and a military solution is taken to be the existential way out. About everybody at the sametime knows it, in his heart of hearts, that army solution is no solution, it will only lead to further disasters." Times of India on 1st Oct strangely, but consistently advocates against political solution. "No political solution can be attempted in Punjab till back of terrorism is broken." The sentiments are repeated by Indian Express on 2 Oct "The way to restoration of order in the religious affairs of the Sikhs and of the peace in Punjab will be opened only if the menace of the armed terrorist is ended". But Hindustan Times on 2 Oct involves political action "the police and the para military forces should be more effective in their efforts of curb terrorism—but equally important is the need to fight the menace at the political and peoples level". However the Tribune on 2 Oct is forthright in demanding "The long promised economic package and political initiative have acquired new relevance in Punjab wisdom decrees that is would be folly to postpone a settlement on the expectation of an early end to terrorism in the state".

On the solution of Punjab situation, one Mr SMA Hashimi writes to Editor Statesman on 23 Sept—"Free all Sikh leader's. Meanwhile Mr. Ribeiro's men must take only minimal action against those who directly indulge in violence. All Sikh organisations irrespective of their political colour, must be allowed to function openly and to propagate their views even in favour of Khalistan, provided they do not promote terrorism. Mr. S.S. Gill in Indian Express on 6 Oct under "Times for talks in Punjab"—enumerates some concrete jestures to be made by the Government to create a favourable climate for a durable settlement. His few suggestions are:—

1. The Government should refrain from openly issuing

Sound and Fury

Bofors like Watergate, is walking into our lexicon.

V.R. Krishan Iyer, former Supreme Court judge.

India and Tibet have a guru-shisya relationship. When the shisya is facing problems, there is a moral responsibility on the part of the guru.

The Dalai Lama, Tibetan leader

Well I am a controversial swami... Even Ram, Krishna and Buddha were controversial in their times, were they not?

Chandra Swami, controversial godman

Adopted orphans are no better than slaves in the west. Nripen Chakraborty, Tripura chief minister, on Chakma children being adopted in France.

We seem to be holding this cup (World Cup cricket) apparently because Mr. Sathe got annoyed because he didn't get some complimentary tickets to watch the last World Cup final in England. Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi, former Indian cricket captain and sports journalist.

Attending to my ailing father is more important than attending a cricket match where I am to be presented with a car.

Imran Khan, Pakistani cricket captain.

I do not belong to a particular group and I am not a member of any party... From the first day itself, I had made it clear that nobody, no group could use me as its rubber stamp.

Darshan Singh Ragi in Sunday

I am ready to admit that I have failed... that our generation has failed.

Margaret Alva, on the Deorala sati incident, quoted in The Sunday Observer

My proximity to the Prime Minister is purely social. I've never been an advisor of his. I'm not really very important in the prime minister's life.

Amitabh Bachchan in Sunday

Everything I possess should be beautiful and the best-house, car, plane or woman. Why not? Even God likes good things.

Dhirendra Brahmachari in Onlooker

I had once wept (over South Africa). But I am not weeping today because I am getting ready for the coming explosion.

President Kaunda of Zambia.

It is one of the tragedies of our time that an Indian peacekeeping force is actually engaged in waging war and that the government of India, which professes to safeguard the interests of The Tamil population in Sri Lanka, is actually engaged in killing them—

Mr. Jaswant Singh, Janata Party general secretary.

If we look statistically, there are fewer killings in Punjab per month or per year, however you work it out, than in many of the major cities in the United States.

Rajiv Gandhi in Washington.

I respect Jyoti Basu even though we do not see eye to eye on Gorkhaland. He is perhaps the best chief minister in the country.

Subhas Ghising

There are not many differences between Marxism and Buddhism. We could have something like 'Buddhocommunism' in Tibet.

The Dalai Lama in the Sunday Observer

commendation certificates to SGPC or the Akalis.

2. Any temptation to promote a split between the extremists and the moderate Akalis should be resisted.

3. Constructive efforts should be made to convince the Sikhs of the futility of the extremist's tactics.

4. Sikhs cannot see the point in keeping Jodhpur detenus imprisoned for more than three years. How can you treat 360 human beings as a mere "trump card or a bargaining counter"?

5. Case of Sikh army deserters

needs a much more sensitive and imaginative handling.

6. Unconditional release of Mr. P.S. Badal, Mr. G.S. Tohra and Jodhpur detenus would be only the opening moves in this game.

But Mr. Rajiv Gandhi though claims "open mind" appears to have his mind closed on the solution of Punjab for the present. In an interview to BBC on 9 Oct (Times of India 10 Oct) Rajiv Gandhi said "I do not think Punjab is ready for it just yet. It is getting ready for it. But we have an open mind".

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Managing Editor
Amrik Singh
Editors
G.S. Sandhu, A.S. Narang
Circulation
Lt. Col. Manohar Singh (Retd.)
Publishers
Ekta Trust
2/12, Sarva Priya Vihar
New Delhi 110016
Ph. 660738
Business
3-Masgid Road, Jangpura
new Delhi 110014
Ph. 619284.

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The Great Delhi Killing Three Years Later

Of the two dramatic events in 1984, the November killing appears to have had more long lasting impact than the Operation Bluestar. This is for two reasons. The shock of the Bluestar was to some extent superceded by what happened a few months later though it must be added that the continued detention of Jodhpur detenus is a standing reminder of the earlier grim event. But perhaps it is the second reason which is more important.

Operation Bluestar meant two things; sacrilege and intimidation. An attack on the Golden Temple complex was an act of sacrilege in the eyes of most devotees. Some of them did see what occasioned it; still they did not condone it. The attitude towards Bhindranwale had been ambivalent. At one level the Sikhs had approved of him, at another level they had disapproved of him. When the complex was attacked and the Akal Takhat was damaged it was their religious susceptibilities that were outraged. They were angry and unhappy and expressed it in no uncertain terms. But a sacrilege once committed cannot be undone. With the passage of time therefore, painful though it was, more and more people came to accept it.

As to the intimidation part, it did not work at all, as subsequent developments have shown. The blow had been much bigger than the situation warranted. It was delivered on a day when there were a large number of visitors, some from distant places even. Quite a few of them were detained at that time and still continue to be under detention. Even otherwise, a couple of thousands died and the complex was converted into a battle field. All this was ugly and distasteful and people felt outraged. But for anyone to argue that it led to the intimidation of a large mass of Sikhs would be to against the evidence.

And yet it seemed that intimidation was one of the important objectives. If it did not work in Amritsar, maybe it could work elsewhere or at least it could work outside Punjab. This was a contingency which the Akali leadership had either not taken into account or had refused to consider seriously. The more cynical of them took the view that the Sikhs outside Punjab could be sacrificed in the interest of those who lived in the Punjab. About 20 per cent of them lived outside the Punjab. It was not a small number. At the same time being dispersed over a wide area they could not speak with one voice. If they had anything like a point of view it remained unknown and unheard.

The Congress party on the other hand which had in the first instance deliberately complicated the Punjab situation in order to get electoral mileage out of it looked upon the murder of Mrs. Indira Gandhi as yet another opportunity to take the crisis to a higher stage of explosiveness. The killing in Delhi and elsewhere was more organised than spontaneous. Anger over Mrs. Gandhi's assassination was widespread and some attacks on the Sikhs were unprompted. After all, for the preceding couple of years the Sikhs had been projected as anti-national and separatists. What had happened on 31.10.1984 seemed to confirm what a large number of people believed. But the point about November killing was not the way the people expressed their anger but the direction that was given to it.

For three days following the assassination Delhi was subjected to an orgy of violence and crime, the like of which has not been seen anywhere in recent times. What happens in South Africa is bad enough. Similarly what happened to the Jews in Europe during wartime was equally grim. But there is one basic difference between these two recent parallels and what happened in Delhi.

In Germany the violence was state organised and it was systematic. In South Africa the decision to use violence is again state approved and state organised. What was different about the killing in Delhi was that the state decided to turn passive and both permitted and encouraged all kinds of people to loot and burn and rape and kill. To the extent that any resources were required, those were provided by people connected with the ruling party.

In fact, the distinction between the government and the party more or less disappeared during those three days and the resources of the government (for instance, those of the DTC and the DESU) were used as extensively as the government itself could have done. It was a new turn in Indian polity in so far as the state abdicated its function of protecting its citizens and permitted a group of organised and not so organised criminals to do what they pleased.

The state has not yet recovered from the damage it inflicted upon itself. Precisely speaking, the damage was of three kinds. One, the basic damage was to the fabric and credibility of the state. Violence, once unleashed, undermines the fabric of the state. Once undermined, it cannot recover its credibility and its potency so easily. This is precisely what has happened. The police in Delhi might have been reorganised in bureaucratic terms but its morale is another question.

Nobody in the police force is objective or dispassionate as he is required to be. More or less everyone is committed to a certain point of view, and that is determined by his sympathy with this

community or that and not of his professional role of being a policeman. Such a statement would be disputed and it is just as good as it is disputed. It at least indicates that in terms of theory it is recognised that the police ought to be objective and dispassionate.

In actual practice however it is not, whether in Delhi or elsewhere. But there is a public display of being objective and professional. It even works upto a point. But if ever there is another serious breakdown of law and order, the pretence will fall away and the reality will turn out to be as ugly and repulsive as it was in November, 1984. Some kind of an internal enquiry was carried out. It is known to the top bosses who acted in which manner and with what degree of objectivity or the lack of it. But the whole thing is kept such a closely guarded secret that it is not made known even to what may be described as the junior bosses. It is also recognised that the police morale and professionalism can never be restored to the pre-1984 situation and therefore the best that can be done is to put a good face on it and try to function as if nothing out of the nothing ordinary had happened.

In a sense what happened to the police force had been building up for a couple of decades. Almost everywhere, the police was being used in furtherance of the policies and preference of whichever party was in power. Its professionalism had been sacrificed to the whims and fancies of those were in authority. Only the police had not been communalised to such an extent. This happened in November, 1984. For anyone to imagine therefore that the police can now be relied upon to act objectively (without reference to the community involved) and in the interest of law and justice is to delude himself. There is so much more that can be said on the subject but then it should not be necessary to do so.

Secondly not only was the state fabric damaged, even the political party which organised the killing was equally damaged. Till the Punjab crisis blew up, the Congress party represented the middle ground in Indian political life. The BJP and one or two others were supposed to represent the right wing and the Communists and some other subsidiary groups were supposed to represent the left wing.

The Congress stood somewhere in the middle partly because of its mass character and partly because of its historical traditions. There were always individuals and groups who were committed to the left or the right but they did not constitute more than a fringe and did not in any significant way determine the policies of the Congress party. If anything the Congress had an image of being slightly to the left of the Centre.

The Congress party had received a serious set back when at the end of 1982, both Karnataka and Andhra voted against the Congress in the state elections. Even before that had happened, Mrs Gandhi had taken out some kind of an insurance policy in so far as she had been fishing in the troubled waters of Punjab for quite a while. Once out of power, the Akalis had started making all kinds of noises. Before 1980 was out, they had formulated a long list of demands. The whole of 1981 was taken up with all kinds of contacts and parleys between Akali and the government and the situation witnessed several ups and downs. The climax came in the threat of the Akali to sabotage the Asian Games in November '82 and the determination of Mrs Gandhi not to permit that to happen. In brief, before the reverses in Andhra and Karnataka hit the Congress party on its head, the Centre's policy towards Punjab was open-ended or almost so. Whether the knots already tied up were to be untied or tied further therefore was an option that was available. In a sense, the decision what was to be done in the Punjab had been taken down South when both those states threw out the Congress in a decisive and resounding manner.

The tremors of this defeat were heard all over and the first counter-attack by the Congress party came in the election to the Delhi Metropolitan Council in early '83. The communal card was used and quite successfully. After that there was no going back. The political line was further perfected in the J&K election a few months later. In a manner of speaking the foundation of what happened in 1984 had been laid between 1981 and 1983.

So much has been written on this subject that it would be superfluous to repeat those things. What needs to be understood is that after the left of the Centre policy which had been projected by the Congress party since 1947, if not even earlier, had failed to deliver the goods, in the post-1982 than, the Congress party in the interests of sheer survival deliberately went communal. Of course it reaped a rich harvest and if it is in power today, it is largely because of the decisions made then and the events and development following those decisions.

The grip of the communal considerations has been so strong that even though some half-hearted attempts have been made to shake it off, the Congress party has got further trapped in the quicksands of communal politics. When, for instance, the Ram Janam Bhumi and Babri Masjid controversy was manufactured (out of more or less non-existent material in early 1986) the Congress party felt powerless to be able to do anything to prevent the issue assuming the form that it did. The Meerut riots which followed a little later were a continuation of the same kind of politics. There seems to be a slight lull on the communal front just now but there is no knowing when it may hot up again and lead to further rioting and killing.

The point which is sought to be made is that this communalisation of Indian polity is there to stay at least for sometime in the near future. The Congress party would try in its own limited and feeble way to carry out some kind of a mid-course correction so that it can return to its earlier left of the Centre posture. But it is not likely to succeed. The communal past catches up with it whenever it tries to carry out such a mid-course-correction. In other words, the character of Indian polity has undergone a qualitative change. As far as one can judge, a counter change is neither on the horizon nor is it very likely to take place at last in the short run.

The third consequence has been upon the credibility of the Prime Minister and the way it has been seriously undermined. Several actions of his have made him take a partisan attitude in the matter. For instance, in his first election address in Delhi, he referred to the inevitability of commotion. The image that he used was that of a big tree falling with consequent convulsions in the polity. Whatever he might have said on subsequent occasions, that image has stuck; this is for the reason that the image sums up the kind of policy that he has been following through out this period.

Then there was the question of holding an enquiry into the killing in Delhi. He evaded the enquiry as long as he could. Once it became impossible to evade it any further, an enquiry was set up but the terms of reference were so framed that those who had suffered were required to prove that they had suffered. The onus of proof was on them. This was totally unlike similar enquiries where "the causes and course of riots" are always enquired into.

Despite all the games that were played there was a sizeable body of evidence presented to the Misra Commission. But the Commission conducted its proceedings in such a questionable manner that those who represented the sufferers—the Citizens Justice Committee headed by C M Sekri, the former Chief Justice of India—decided to withdraw half way through. The report when it appeared was a white wash job at best. Nothing has happened after that. Even the two panels that had been appointed as a follow-up of that enquiry report have been allowed to fade out. The sumtotal of this very elaborately organised charade was that not a single person has been prosecuted or convicted for the killing of approximately 5000 people.

The Prime Minister's credibility not only amongst the Sikhs who suffered but also in the eyes of all disinterested and dispassionate people is at the rock bottom. Somebody else's credibility being questioned hurts the state but does not undermine it. When the chief protagonist is the Prime Minister himself it is another story. Indeed it is much more than a story. It is a tragic tale and how it ends up yet remains to be seen.

Three years after the November killing therefore, one thing is clear: the attempt to treat those killings as a non-event has not succeeded nor is it going to succeed. The consideration which gave birth to what happened in Punjab and the manner in which that problem was manipulated to serve the electoral purposes of the Congress party together with all that has happened since then constitute a sad chapter in recent political history.

Nothing short of a resolution followed by appropriate executive action, adopted in a formal session of Parliament will bring about a resolution of this problem. Evidently the political party which brought about such a situation and organised man killing is not going to condemn itself.

Dilemma for the Centre

Continued from page 1

the affairs of gurdwaras were elected and the irony is that it is the Central government which has to decide which one of them is the validly elected body and issue a notification thereafter. The decision is not easy to make and how the Centre untangles the mess remains to be seen.

The UAD group maintains that their election was valid as it is only the President or in his absence the Vice-President who has the authority to call an election meeting. Therefore, their meeting was valid. The Barnala group says that their members were assaulted and prevented from attending the meeting. They then held a meeting of their group and elected the office-bearers. They had the necessary quorum of 31 members as 61 members were present. This arguments cuts both ways as the UAD had also the necessary quorum as 65 members attended the meeting.

Gurdwaras Act

The problem is that the Sikh Gurdwara Act of 1925 is vague on certain vital matters involved in this dispute. It does not provide for a Returning Officer to hold the annual general meeting of SPGC. Article 60 of the Act says that the President and in his absence the Vice-President shall preside over the meeting and if both are not present members shall elect one of themselves as chairman for the purpose of the meeting. Article 59 says that the quorum shall be 31 or more members. One interpretation of these two articles is that both the meetings were valid. It is learnt that the Election Department of the Punjab government has taken this view and forwarded its report to the Governor for sending it on to the Centre with his recommendation. The Governor is believed to be consulting the Advocate General about it.

Whether the Centre likes it or not, the ball is now in its court and it will have to handle the "baby." Obviously, it cannot declare both the meetings valid as there cannot be two presidents of a body. If it declares election of one group valid, the other group can challenge it and the Centre again will have to appoint an inquiry committee under Article 147 to investigate the conduct of elections.

The Centre has a third option. It can abolish the Gurdwara Act and appoint a trust of eminent Sikhs in its place but which Sikh will dare come forward to manage gurdwaras at the present juncture. Already the Acting jathedar of the Akal Takht, Prof. Darshan Singh Ragi, has walked out of the Golden Temple out of fear of the militants. He wants the Golden Temple to be freed of militants before he resumes charge. In any case, he has been "removed" from the post. The Centre has to walk very gingerly as any step taken by it should not seem like interfering in the religious affairs of the Sikhs as that would unite all the Akali factions which it does not want as a matter of policy.

The situation is no less

embarrassing for the Akali leaders is that they want to hunt with the hound and run with the hare. This tendency to ride two horses at the same time is the

militants from going in. Whatever else may have happened to alienate the Sikh community, the Akali leaders forget that it is primarily the

The situation is no less embarrassing for the Akali leaders is that they want to hunt with the hound and run with the hare. This tendency to ride two horses at the same time is the root cause of their present predicament. They want a negotiated settlement of the Punjab problem within the Indian constitution and yet they do not want to displease the militants, who want Khalistan.

root cause of their present predicament. They want a negotiated settlement of the Punjab problem within the Indian constitution and yet they do not want to displease the militants, who want Khalistan.

Both the Akali and SGPC leaders have opposed the holding of 'sarbat khalsa' by the militants on Diwali day and yet they decried the arrest of three priests who supported the call for 'sarbat khalsa'. The UAD leaders decided at a recent meeting in Chandigarh that they would stand up to the militants but how they would do it is not known. They want Prof. Darshan Singh Ragi to go back to Amritsar to resume charge and assure him that UAD jatha will accompany him but the Ragi is not willing to go till the Golden Temple is freed of militants.

Who will free the Golden Temple from the militants? The police? Well, the police is criticised every time it enters the temple precincts in prevent of the militants or when it sets up pickets outside to prevent

duty of the Sikhs to restore sanity and peace in gurdwaras. Didn't the Sikhs free gurdwaras of corrupt mahants in the twenties? The Akalis or for that matter the Sikhs should ask themselves whether the time has come for another gurdwara reform movement.

While it is the duty of the Sikhs to maintain the sanctity of gurdwaras, it is not the duty of the Akalis or the Sikhs to maintain law and order. It is primarily the responsibility of the civil administration and the police. To hold the Sikhs responsible for deterioration in the law and order situation is like passing the buck. It is the various acts of commission and omission by the law and order machinery in the State which is creating a feeling of alienation among the Sikhs which in turn has spawned the present ambivalent attitude.

The Punjab police chief, Mr. J.F. Rebelro, may deny that no fake encounters are taking place, but occasional inquiries and escape from police custody

of terrorists and later their bodies being found on roadsides create a lot of doubt in the people's minds. Even a leader like Mr. Satpal Dang has pointed out through letters to the police and press statements instances of police excesses and torture of innocent persons. Knowing the image of the police in the country, the recent amendment of the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act giving more powers to the police is going to create more misgivings despite the assurance of Mr. Rebelro that it will not be misused.

The shifting of the onus on the accused to prove himself innocent is going to lead to further hardship. Giving such wide powers to the police is against the spirit of democracy and the rule of law. No doubt terrorists are against democracy and want to destroy it, it does not mean that State terrorism is the answer to it. The bullet should be used to save democracy and not destroy it.

words without the support of the people. How does one do it? By isolating them from the terrorists. But if the people feel alienated, they cannot be isolated from terrorists. Despite assurance, not a single person has been punished so far for the killing of several thousand Sikhs in Delhi in November 1984. The Jodhpur detainees are languishing in jail for the last three years without trial. This is against the rule of law. If a person is guilty, he should be tried and punished. If innocent, he should be freed.

This feeling of alienation among the Sikhs can be removed by a bold political initiative to solve the tangle. The sense of alienation once removed can pave the way for a meaningful dialogue. For this both the parties must come to the negotiating table by proving their sincerity: the Centre by strictly adhering to the rule of law and the Sikhs by stating unequivocally that they want a solution within the Indian

Who will free the Golden Temple from the militants? The police? Well, the police is criticised every time it enters the temple precincts in prevent of the militants or when it sets up pickets outside to prevent militants from going in. Whatever else may have happened to alienate the Sikh community, the Akali leaders forget that it is primarily the duty of the Sikhs to restore sanity and peace in gurdwaras. Didn't the Sikhs free gurdwaras of corrupt mahants in the twenties? The Akalis or for that matter the Sikhs should ask themselves whether the time has come for another gurdwara reform movement.

Terrorism should be curbed with a heavy hand but even the police chief, Mr. Rebelro, has said repeatedly that the "war" against terrorism cannot be won without winning the hearts and minds of the people, in other

constitution. Any more delay in the solution is going to harm the Sikhs more than the others. The Centre too should not wait for 20 years before arriving at a settlement as it did in Mizoram.

Delhi Polls

Continued from page 1

significant in the context of the talk of the new setup is that almost all the political parties including the ruling Congress (I) have promised full Statehood for Delhi.

Populism

The new setup if it comes through will be a step towards Statehood as more power might be vested in the new body. However, what kind of setup it would be is not clear. One thing that is certain is that Delhi will not get the status of a full-fledged State. Grant of Statehood has all along been opposed by the successive Central Governments including the Janata Government in view of the bitter experience immediately after independence when the capital had a State Assembly.

This is being interpreted in political circles as a move on the part of the ruling Congress (I) to ensure its hold over Delhi which is significant in national politics.

The performance of the ruling party both in the Delhi administration and the Delhi Municipal Corporation has not been satisfactory. This is largely attributed to the fact that the local leadership has been

quite weak. In fact it was not doing anything on its own and was most of the time looking to the two Central Ministers from Delhi who seem to be running the local party organisation and the affairs of the administration and the civic body through remote control.

Factionalism

Party workers feel that they have been let down by the party high command which had merely reallocated the work to the vice-presidents and the general secretaries.

The DPCC has been rendered defunct by Union ministers HKL Bhagat and Jagdish Tytler who, supported by their respective factions in the Congress (I), are said to be running a parallel administration.

Bhagat's supporters believe elections should not be held in view of the severe drought facing the country, while Tytler's camp insists that they should be held, otherwise the image of the party would receive a setback. "This is because Bhagat is the supremo of Delhi and has placed his men in key positions, leaving Tytler's men out of the power game," a source said.

The Healing Touch demands

Punish the Guilty and Release the Innocent

(From Our Special Correspondent)

The talk of healing touch and imperative of political solution for Punjab continues without any substantial steps for these ends. While the Government keeps on dithering, the democratic minded people are continuously stressing the need for justice.

During November 1987 session of the Parliament once again democratic and civil liberties organisations are planning to demonstrate before the Parliament and other places to impress upon the rulers the necessity of justice.

Punjab Action Committee consisting of eminent citizens including S/Sh. R.R. Diwakar, Baba Amte, Ravinder Upadhyay, Sh. Mati Nirmala Gandhi, Justices Rajinder Sachar & V.M. Tarkunde, S/Shri Radha Krishana, Kuldip Nayar, Rajni Kothari, Inder Gujral, K. Arunachalam, Balraj Puri, S.N. Subarao, Sat Pal Grover,

Acharaya Ram Murth, Lt. Gen. J.S. Aroura (Retd.), Vijay Pratap, Ramesh Sharma, N.D. Panchaoli, Rup Narain and several others are planning a protest demonstration on 15 November to demand release of Jodhpur detenus and initiate action against criminals involved in November 1984 riots. The protestors will offer themselves for arrest.

Another month long protest demonstration is being organised by the Sikh Forum in association with several other democratic and civil liberties organisations. In this programme a group of 51 persons will sit on a relay hunger strike for 30 days to demand punishment for guilty and release of the innocent. Starting from 16 November a 51 member group from different localities and cities will sit on a days hunger strike at the boat club.

A Lot of Liars are we?

Mohinder Singh

Satyameva Jayate (Truth alone Triumphs) lies enshrined as the national motto. To Gandhi, the father of our nation, 'there is no other God than Truth'. The famous 'experiments' weren't any isolated practices in private morality, but the whole of his public life suffused with truth be it fighting the foes of freedom or the daily dealings with his immediate gaolers.

And then you look at the current national scene. One is almost led to wonder whether Gandhi can be deemed a representative father or was he freak? Well, a little lying in the public domain, more so in politics, is perhaps inescapable for common mortals. But what's happening now scandals like Bofors an indication is something beyond belief. Truth at higher levels is taking a beating this land has rarely witnessed before. But then who else isn't lying? Business tycoons lying blatantly for safety or gain. Professors lying shamefacedly for bogus Ph. D's or research grants. Applicants lying brazenly for jobs or admissions. Manufacturers lying, sellers lying, even matrimonial advertisers lying.

Tradition

Is lying here on the increase? Are we growing more dishonest? Has something in our basic social fabric changed? The apologists argue, widespread lies were always with us. Houseboys lied when accosted with a chipped china cup or a missing bit of butter. Dhobies and darzies lied in defaulting on delivery schedules. Workers lied coming late or skipping a day of work. Teenagers lied their way out of escapades. Lying in courts and mind you, on oath was commonly taken more as a sport than sin. And all those white lies; telling one's hostess one wasn't hungry when actually one was. In fact, according to these disputants, with the country's independence and the impact of progressive social mores, we should be lying less.

One thing however is fairly clear. Our moral indignation over a lie seems to be watering down; we may be more irked than enraged. To that extent, the traditional middle-class values have suffered a setback; assuming, there hasn't been an alarming decline in general honesty. Few parents find themselves admonishing their progeny with the same conviction and vigour, 'you can't tell a lie'. Most of us still prize the quality of truthfulness in our friends, relatives, mates or children. We feel upset, rather hurt, when a close one crosses the boundary of 'acceptable' untruth; is discovered lying to evade responsibility or shift blame. Yet the age-old horror of lies as such, may well be on the wane.

Some blame this downward trend on the growing lack of

parental control. Others blame it on religious instruction taking a backseat. Many are simply convinced that the modern craze for material goods is the root cause of the malaise. But like in many other things, the accusing finger is primarily pointed at politics.

The Political Arena

Lies in the political arena are nothing new. Likewise they aren't a monopoly of any people or government. A host of politicians all over view it more as a rule of the game. Take recourse to duplicity to win an election or tell a lie to hold on to power the sort of thing they might resist in normal personal relations. Somehow we had laboured under the impression, we were a little special we had the colossus of Gandhi striding on the Indian stage. And it seems, under his influence and Nehru's exceptional integrity of character, we managed to suppress the worst excesses of the system. Certain things were just not done. Perhaps this 'unnatural' suppression has produced its own reaction. We have now sprung into full bloom. And one wouldn't be surprised if we are rated far ahead of many other nations in the politics of lying.

A few things in the political field are still being clung to tenaciously. 'American Presidents should never lie to the public'; the one who did had to go, and another one a popular one is undergoing intensive interrogation and probes. You have to be very careful of what you tell the British Parliament. Profumo was removed, not for the security risks involved in consorting with Christine Keeler or the act of profligacy itself, but for lying to the parliament. And here we have our latest spectacle of ministerial half-truths if not untruths, misinformation, disinformation and dissembling on the floors of both the Houses, and cheekily getting away with it all. Possibly a farewell knock has been delivered to this hoary tradition of the Mother Parliament.

Inevitably, political lying with all those charges and counter-charges, ploys and postures remain a highly complex affair. And the liars trot out their own justification for telling lies. For one thing, they find the popular press grown far too nosy and investigative for comfort. Dubious statements or dealings which often went away unnoticed are now pounced upon. The emerging tribe of Arun Shouries and Sailesh Kottarys is giving the players some unrest. Ironically, the press's new vigilance may itself be provoking more deception and lies, in a bid to contain and circumvent it. If the press can filch confidential government documents, why can't others lie in their defence, or even doctor documents? A few times an unfriendly press is intentionally put on a wrong scent with a line

of lies. It's like war, the participants say. And didn't Churchill say somewhere, 'In wartime, the truth is so precious that she should be attended with a bodyguard of lies'.

Government officials

Top government officials who at one time prided themselves on their rectitude have mostly taken to a special brand of lies that can be loosely characterised as lies of expediency or cowardice. They would rarely tell a visitor, his request or representation couldn't be granted. They may have themselves torpedoed the proposal in the file, but to the caller more so, to a political caller their standard response. 'I'd do my best'. He goes away pleased, at least not displeased. Who knows he may ultimately win? They have seen not a few cases of such queer wins.

In advanced countries, especially USA, the big business with its competitive pressures and the combative approach, 'Do whatever is necessary to succeed', is a good deal held responsible for

Letters

Sikhs living outside Punjab

Sir,
Accompanied by my wife, I was holidaying in Goa, when innocent bus passengers were slaughtered near Mukatsar during the last week of July last year. A preheating tension in reaction to this incident, I was worried about our return journey. The violent incidents at Delhi on the following day further worried me. Fortunately, when we returned after about ten days, normalcy was restored.

During our visit to Goa, we called on Dr. Gopal Singh, the Governor (then Lt. Governor) at Raj Niwas. He also expressed his anguish over the incidents of violence in Punjab. All newspapers, he said, carry these news reports on their front page. The Sikhs living outside have been feeling insecure in view of these violent incidents and apprehending backlash in reaction. According to Dr. Singh, a large number of youths belonging to these Sikh families, who have flourishing business, had shaved off their beards and got shorn their hair. Saying no Government will allow dismembering of its country, Dr. Singh said that the Government can crush the so-called Khalistan movement within 24 hours.

On our return way, we stayed at Pune for two days. Hardly a week has passed after our return, that General A.S. Vaidya (Retd) was assassinated in Pune inviting backlash in almost all cities and towns of Maharashtra. I thought had we been there at this time, how difficult situation we had to face.

the current climate of lying and deception. It's commercial publicity, more so TV advertisements, are blamed for fuelling general public apathy and scepticism towards truth. Children viewing TV ads day in and day out, with the bloated claims and the exaggerated promises, become pretty cynical.

We aren't yet in the same class but could be well on the road to it. Business wheelings and dealings are plainly getting sharper, the struggle for success posing harsher. The common man is increasingly besieged by the modern communication media (run by some of the cleverest men in the country), with all its contrary and conflicting messages.

We also visited Bombay, Nanded (Hazur Sahib), Manmad and Aurangabad during our sojourn in Goa and Maharashtra. A number of Sikhs told me that mischievous and communal elements often had been taunting them to "go to your Khalistan".

I am posted at Shimla for the last six months. At the surface there is calm and peace. Sikhs have been living in harmony with their Hindu brethren in Himachal. Though there is no dearth of mischievous and communal elements, who exploit every situation and incite violence against the Sikhs but by and large, the people of this State are religious minded, God fearing, humble and peace loving. After the Lalru and Fatehabad killings strong reaction was evoked here. Since six victims of Lalru incident belonged to Hamirpur, the backlash was natural. As the tourist season was its peak, thousand of (Sikh) tourists were visiting this hilly State. The mob or groups of mischievous youths roughed up, assaulted, harassed and insulted any Sikh came across to them. Their religious places were attacked and desecrated. Their turbans were torn or put on fire. Their cars were damaged. I too was hauled up by a group of communal minded youths at The Ridge, but firm stand taken by a colleague of mine had saved the situation. There is no doubt that thousand of Hindus protect their Sikh brethren from the unruly groups. Kullu and Manali were worst hit by the anti-Sikh riots. Strangely, when these violent incidents were going on against the Sikhs, the Chief Minister was touring his constituency and was busy in laying foundation stone ceremonies, inaugurations and delivering "hashan" Rome was burning at Nero was fiddling. The Deputy Commissioner Shimla and the district Police chief were also accompanying him. There was no senior officer to control the situation. The police remained mute witness against most of these anti-Sikh violent incidents.

Though the terrorists often took to their guns to kill innocent Hindus in resentment against the killings of "innocent" Sikh youths in "fake" encounters, but they are responsible for inviting backlash due to killing of innocent Hindus in Punjab.

I am pondering how long such like situation would

Having not been exposed to such stuff for long, he often finds himself hardly in a position to isolate the phoney from the real, the true from the false, of what's said and shown to him. A situation not very conducive to the cult of truth.

Disturbed by these trends, many companies in the West have started hiring outside ethics specialists, devising written ethics policies and training employees in the same. It's too early to determine whether such corporate ethics programmes will actually succeed or remain more a window-dressing. Yet, one can well envisage a possible public backlash against this avalanche of present-day lying. A kind of revival movement in the favour of everyday truth.

continue? How long this circle reaction and backlash would continue? How long the political leaders including the ruling party would pursue the 'Divide and rule' policy creating a wedge between the Hindus and Sikhs for their vested interests?

Harbir Singh Bhanwar

The Indian Muslims

Mr. Jatindar Kumar from Darbanga in his letter in Times of India 17 Oct, 1987 have raised certain doubts about the loyalty of Indian Muslims to India (their own country of birth), and have asked them to prove that they are Indians and not Pakistani, because in some homes of Muslims the picture of Mr. Jinnah and Jeneral Zia are being displayed and not of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru. I am sure that there will be some houses in Pakistan, where pictures of these two Indian leaders will be displayed. But, we have never heard any Pakistani doubting loyalty of those Muslims for Pakistan. These are the out come of personal likes and dislikes and as such do not determine the stamp of loyalty or other wise. If we read history, one would find that the Indian Muslims have been true Indian nationals before partition and the partition has not been due to their doings, but it has been due to the distrust imposed by Hindu casteism. The Caste Hindus did not trust the Muslim so was the case of Muslims. They always doted Hindu dominance and feared humiliation from Hindu castism in their daily conduct of life a hurt to selfrespect. Therefore, we cannot blame Muslims for the partition of India. What we need to, conceive and to appreciate is for the common good of old India (Prepartitions), because in that lies key to our defence and economic prosperity of people in India, Pakistan and Bangla Desh. We should respect geographical sovereignty of one another and then evolve an understanding of mutual good will and trust, rather worrying about the loyalty of one another. With this strategy all can claim to be a real welfare state for their despective people by saving huge funds from their defence budgets and employing their time and energises for removal of poverty.

Lt. Iol Manohar Singh (Rtd)
Defence Colony, New Delhi.

Nanakism

A New World Order— Temporal And Spiritual

Ishar Singh

GOD'S ways are inscrutable. But man has come to know, by experience of ages, the one particular job of God, which He always goes on performing. That job is what Guru Nanak describes "He fills up what are empty, and empties what are filled up; This is the job of the lord". Change is thus a divine law, and "old order changeth yielding place to new", as also said by Tennyson in his lofty poetry.

The population explosion has thrown the wheels of the world chariot out of gear. Gigantic problems have cropped up, how to meet the essential needs of all. Science and technology, with its numerous new ways, is at the service of man, but man still suffers inadequacies and shortages. Agonising cries are coming from different parts of the world about shortages of food, fuel, minerals and other essentials. Most of the troubles, miseries, and tribulations, through which the world is passing are man made, as man has become bankrupt in a vital human value. And who is responsible for the shortages? Have the natural resources dried up? Perhaps not. If anything is dried up, it is the human good sense, the same vital value, which we have been discussing. Guru Nanak has said in this respect "Man may get tired to receive, but the giver will go on giving; Since uncounted ages man has been enjoying the bounties of God". God's good earth has been yielding man's necessities from unknown times, while unlimited and immeasurable stocks lie still in its bosom.

UNESCO Technical Editor for Geothermal energy, Christopher Armstead, says: "The long term prospects of geothermal energy could be prodigious, for we have, in the interior regions of the earth, a store of energy, so vast, that others, which may conceivably lie within our grasp, pale into insignificance". Armstead further holds that huge expenses, and efforts, being applied towards outer space, would have been definitely more rewarding towards outer space, would have been definitely more rewarding, if applied towards inner side of earth. Man has been feeling apprehensive as to what will happen if a particular natural source gets dried up. But this fear of annihilation is absolutely unfounded, because so great a part of nature remains untapped so far, and God's Nature is so immensely rich, that the words of Guru Nanak can literally come true, that man may get tired to carry out further probe, but the Nature will never say 'thus far and no further'.

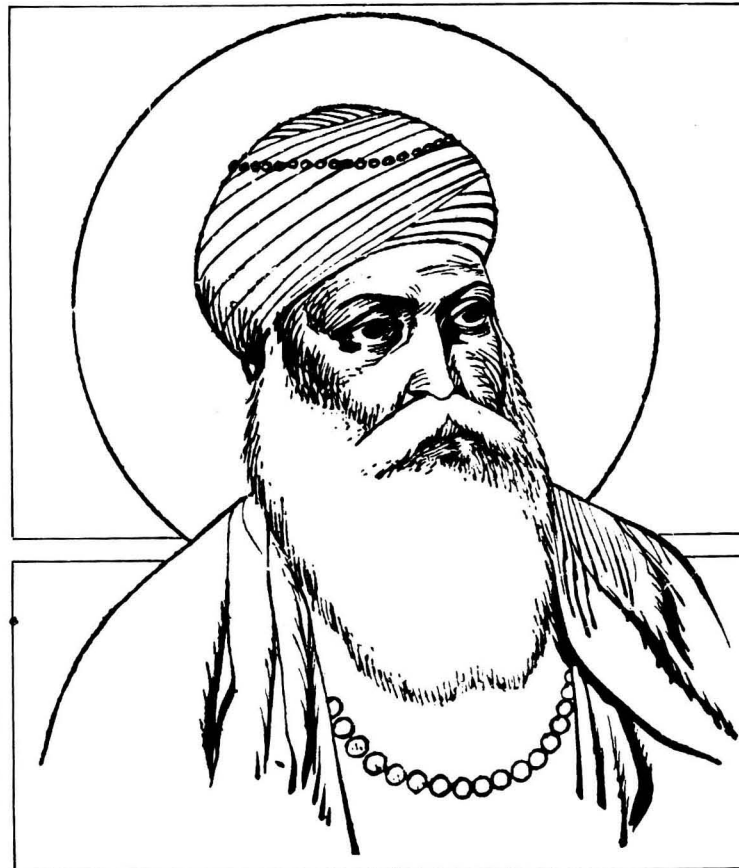
Every thing essential for man is in abundance under the surface of earth, but not everything everywhere. Something is somewhere, and another thing at another place. However when a God-made bounty happens to be found within a man-made territorial boundary, all the egoistic tendencies of man come into play with full force. The ideal way could be that the particular territorial unit may keep sufficient for its own needs, and the rest it may give to others, with a reasonable margin without exploitation.

But no such consideration, no higher human values, no idea of God the giver, is allowed to come in the way. The only god which is respected, the only value which is honoured, is 'self interest'. This latter god is so much respected, that sometimes, the country concerned does not deliberately extract the full quantity of the article, even though there may be acute shortage thereof in other countries. Shortages of essential commodities exist in various parts of the world due to another factor also. Whereas population growth is throwing up an immense challenge to find adequate nourishing food to keep the body and soul together of millions, human beings with their perverted thinking, unable to distinguish between good and bad, essential and non-essential, are merrily going on with their old habits of growing poison instead of food. In millions of acres of God's good earth, not food grains, but tobacco is grown which has been found by overwhelming medical opinion, as having poisonous effect on human health.

Intoxications

The United Nations General Assembly Resolution of 15th May 1970 exhorting all member nations to adequately propagate the injurious effects of tobacco is being conveniently ignored. Again, living with the problem of feeding millions of the poor, perverted human mind takes pleasure in converting huge quantities of articles of food articles which are not food. A modern man, claiming to be a fine specimen of civilized world, sees nothing wrong in destruction of millions of tons of food grains to produce intoxicating drinks. Man is a thinking animal having a conscience. He can have high thinking, and can ascend towards the source of all-thinking, the Super-conscious Power. Or he can have low thinking, and can descend towards low thinking animal

consciousness. Intoxicating drinks work admirably to blur human thinking, and then convert man into animal. The blurring effect may be temporary, out because the intoxicants give a fillip to sensuous tendencies, causing greater indulgence in overeating, and in other animal instincts, the habit produces an enduring effect of animalisation on man. The distance between man, consciousness and God-consciousness is thereby increased.



To add to this process of animalisation, huge international crime agencies like Mafia, 'the World's biggest crime syndicated, with an annual turnover reputed to equal the budget of the United States' are working to propagate intoxicating drugs, charas, heroin, cocaine etc, among adults and youths alike. Something is definitely wrong with man's mind, which is the real culprit of all ills. General thinking of man's mind needs improvement. Shortages of essentials cannot exist, if man's sense of distinguishing between essential and non-essential could be improved.

The dominant force, which is forming the guide light of the prevailing world order, is not righteous thinking, but self-interest, egoism or 'Haumai', both at individual and collective levels. For self-interest, individuals, high or low, Presidents, Prime Ministers, Ministers, Rulers, the rich or poor, are prepared to indulge in immoral, degrading acts, and they sacrifice the vital national interests. Collectively for

serving national interests they are prepared to sacrifice international, or interests of humanity at large. For self-interest huge natural resources, which could be used for satisfying essential needs of man, are being utilised to build up a gigantic machinery of destruction. Guidelight of a common standard of higher human values is conspicuous by its absence. Religion which could be a cementing force has become a divisive force. The result is, that the world order has arrived at an exploding point. From all quarters arise cries of 'I, I', and 'Mine, Mine'. Nations, politicians administrators, employers, employees, peasants, traders, workers, all think and say 'My interest is first', 'Our interest is first'. Forces of ego or Haumai are on top. To obvious necessity is, that the forces of haumai should be suppressed, and subdued, as far as possible, and instead a strong base of higher values of life, which are common and universal, should be created, or in other words a

universal Dharma is concerned they are God in human form. Rama, Krishna, Moses, Zarthusht, Christ, Muhammad and others, all gave messages about One highest Power of God, and His fundamental attributes.

In this respect the same God spirit was working in them to spread the common Dharma of man, even though in different ages emphasis may have been on different aspects of Dharma, Karmas, Gyan, Bhagti etc. There is a common Dharma, and there is a common God spirit to establish it in all ages. This is a grand truth of highest and permanent value, which should not be allowed to be diluted, and alloyed by different methods of conveying it, and by lesser values, the necessity of which is felt in different circumstances of different times. This Truth has been divulged in Bhagwat Gita of Krishna, and the same Truth is divulged in the Adi-Granth of Guru Nanak in a more specific and direct manner.

Saints of God

Certain learned men, well versed in Hindu Vedic literature, came to meet the first five Sikh Gurus in their lifetimes. As a class these Bhattas or bards used to go to courts of kings or rich people to sing their praises for monetary rewards. But the Sikh Gurus had the reputation of being saints of God, not rich men with affluence of worldly riches. The learned Bhattas, who came to meet them were really seekers of Truth, as is amply clear from their own compositions. They were simply surprised to find the spiritual sublimity of the Gurus. They found the Truth here, and with rapturous joy, expressed the Truth about the God Spirit, which they saw in the Gurus. Addressing the God Almighty Himself one of them says "It was Thou, O Lord, who in Satyuga assumed the form of Bawan to play trick with Raja Bai; In Treta it was Thou, who was called Rama, the chief of Raghuvas; In Duapar, Thou became Krishna to liberate Kans; Thou secured kingdom for Ugar Sain, and made thy devotees free from fear; In Kalyuga Thou art now called Guru Nanak, Angad, Amar Das; With Thy command O' Primal Lord, the Guru occupies the eternal and indestructible Spiritual Throne".

It matters little if some of the personalities mentioned here are from Hindu mythology, but these verses depict the Truth that the same God Spirit which was working in earlier ages to protect the good, to destroy the wicked, and establish Dharma came to work in Guru Nanak, and his successor Gurus. It is significant that broad-based and high philosophy of Guru Nanak made it possible to give a place to these verses in his Adi Granth. These verses are indicative of the same sentiments regarding prophets of western, and other religions, who delivered the same central message of Dharma even though accompanied by lesser values depending on particular times. By contact with the enlightened souls of the Gurus, these Bhattas themselves became elevated and enlightened souls, so that their

strong base of 'Dharma' may come into force.

Dharma

The question arises who can suppress the strong forces of egoism, and bring about a change in human minds. Who has the authority to create a strong base of Dharma? the answer is that God Himself does the job in all ages. In the Bhagwat Gita, Lord Krishna, speaking on behalf of God says "For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of Dharma, I come into being from age to age". In all ages, God spirit takes abode in human souls of rare purity and sublimity, to establish Dharma.

This Dharma is not any particular religion, but the core and quintessence of all religions. Religion is only a vehicle to carry the quintessence, the Dharma. The human souls, which are enlightened by God spirit to spread Dharma, may be having their other human activities, but so far as establishment of the

compositions could be included in the Adi Granth. They depict the spiritual process of elevation of the successors of Guru Nanak as also of themselves. Regarding Lehna, the second Nanak, Bhatt Kal says "Lehna put his faith in Guru Nanak, who gave him insight in the Infinite; He received nectar of life in his innerself, and evils vanished; With his mind awakened and illuminated, God Power became manifest through him in the world; He became Sat Guru with perfect peace and tranquillity of mind; All evils and troubles vanish with his broadminded grace; Poet Kal, in deep devotion, feels a natural urge to sing praises of Lehna'.

Another such poet, Mathra, depicting the fifth Guru as perfectly in tune with God spirit, and expressing extreme joy for having come into contact with him, says: "As long as my destiny did not favour me, I have been wandering in vain; I have been drowned in the ocean of darkness; My repentance for this will endure for long; But now Mathra declares the Truth, that here is the Guru, who has come to liberate the world; Whosoever meets Guru kArjan Dev, will achieve freedom from births and deaths".

A Born Genius

Guru Nanak was a born genius, and possessed a perfectly pure soul from his childhood. But true to his own theory, that not God but human beings are born and die, he also ascended towards God by spiritual merit, to receive at a stage of his human life, when he disappeared in Vien river for three days, a command and mission from God to preach Dharma. His own Guru or enlightener was God Almighty himself, and he says: "The transcendental God, the Supreme Soul is the Guru whom Nanak has met". He transmitted his own light and authority to preach Dharma to his successor Gurus, but only after they had ascended, by spiritual merit, to the requisite stage, where man's consciousness blends with God. Guru Nanak describes this process "The human soul blends with the Light of God, and his consciousness merges with the Supreme Consciousness. No more then remain the wanderings of his mind; His instincts of I-ness and aggression, his limitations of uncertainties and unhappinesses vanish away". At this high spiritual stage the Sikh Gurus, though human beings of so recent history, had God spirit working in them. They became True Gurus, and the general criterion of Sat Guru given in the Adi Granth itself appears to be equally applicable to them "He who sees nothing without God is True Guru without touch of worldly illusion; Judge him not by his human form; The humble becomes honoured".

With the highest authority from God therefore Guru Nanak, and his successor Gurus, wanted and worked to being about a change in the old world order, which was crying and sinking under the dead weight of egotistic and divisive forces. But what type of a new Order was required in the

world? Was only an addition to the number of religions of the type already existing called for? What exactly was the thing the absence of which was being felt acutely? The necessity of providing that missing link was visualised by Guru Nanak about five centuries back, but others also, scholars and saints, have, in the recent centuries, expressed similar ideas.

Saint Simon (1760-1825) feeling a dire need of common doctrines and beliefs, not on the basis of traditional Christianity, but on the basis of spirituality what he calls New Christianity, says "Supranational forms of organisation, based on the common industrial spirit, will bring about a revolution in international relations. However these conditions, conducing to an international temporal bonds are insufficient for real international peace and unity. In addition a spiritual bond will be necessary—a common body of doctrines and beliefs affording moral unity to all European societies. And again, as in the middle ages, this will take the form of common religion, for it is conflicting beliefs, which lead inevitably to war. The spiritual and moral unity of man and nations would be based on the New Christianity". Similarly Nietzsche, describing maxims of Zarathustra, expressed the essentiality of a common goal for all mankind "A thousand goals have there been heretofore, for there have been a thousand peoples. But the yoke upon the thousand necks is lacking. Mankind hath as yet no goal. But tell me, I pray my brethren; if a goal be lacking to mankind, is not mankind itself lacking". Recently Prof. Toynbee has said "A literally world-wide community has become a practical possibility—and at the same time an urgent necessity—for the first time in our day, when modern technology has succeeded in annihilating distance. In our present situation, nothing short of union, on a world-wide scale, can save the human race from self-destruction. This task that confronts us in our time is as difficult as it is urgent. We shall therefore be wise to help ourselves by learning and applying, any lessons that our predecessors experience seems to offer to us".

The common spiritual bond, the common body of doctrines and beliefs, which Saint Simon was feeling necessary for all European societies, and the common goal for mankind, as Nietzsche longed, Guru Nanak produced in a concrete form in his Adi Granth for the guidance of the whole world. He brought together the quintessence, the common central part of all religions in the words of saints belonging to various religions. Nay, this is the common Dharma, which existed in all ages previously also, and formed the core of the messages delivered to mankind by Avatars, prophets and saints of different religions.

But because Guru Nanak brought under spotlight the quintessence of Dharma which existed in previous ages also, it seems perfectly correct to say that Guru Nanak's light goes back to those ages also.

Accordingly it is recorded in the Adi Granth "Guru Nanak's light with is greatness and effulgence has become manifest in all ages".

Uniquel Path

How far the peoples of the world care to understand, and follow the teachings of Guru Nanak, is for the peoples themselves to accomplish, but there is no doubt that Guru Nanak has admirably succeeded in producing a unique path of very high degree of commonness, universality, harmony, morality and spirituality. Let us see a few glimpses of the ideas of some eminent non-Sikh scholars who have been able to study and discover the reality. Professor S.S. Raghvachar of Madras University says "He (Guru Nanak) concentrated his Godward attention on the basic verities embodied in all the religious traditions and distilled out of them the universal quintessence. An intensely religious consciousness, utterly emancipated from the separatist outlook of the various historical religious traditions, is a phenomenon, altogether rare in the history of cultures. Guru Nanak achieved this intensity and universalism with outstanding success".

Professor K.A. Nizami of Aligarh University says that Guru Nanak's teachings have the potential to establish an ideal human society, "Guru Nanak believed, that beneath the crust of observances, rituals and conventions, lay the real spirit of religion, which it was the duty of a spiritual mentor to awaken. This spirit is the same in all religions. 'There is only one path to the divine court which is presided over by the One Eternal Lord'. If this universal spirit of religion could be evoked and canalized in the right channels, an ideal human society free from conflicts, dissensions, discrimination and discord—could be established".

Shri J.J. Karam says "Only once in centuries does the mankind get the benediction of such a peerless prophet as Baba Nanak. In him was illuminated the divine flame, which burst into songs celestial. His life was luminous with the light of spirit, which shed its radiant effulgence all round. He was a great seer, saint and mystic. He was a prolific versifier, and a unique singer of the praise of God. A prophet of peace, love, truth and renaissance, he was centuries ahead of his times. His universal message is as fresh and true today as it was then. It is all the more appropriate, and necessary now, when life has been divorced from religion, and new advances of science and technology have generated utter confusion, about the basic values of life. He visited almost all the important places of the country, and also covered many areas outside, in Asia and North Africa spreading the gospel of God-life, professing the philosophy of One God, One Brotherhood, One Law of fellowship and love and preaching the mantar of 'Sat Nam' as the panna of all ills of Man, whether physical, mental, moral or spiritual without any dogmatic or doctrinaire

approach. He led mankind from darkness to light, from unreal to Real, from death to immortality". That Guru Nanak ventured to get out of the marsh of ritualistic and formalistic religious traditions which had been considered sacred before his advent, and opened a new era, wherein all significance gathered round the idea of one common and holy God, who should be man's guide even in all his secular activities, is an aspect which is expressed in his paper by Dr. D.B. Harned of Virginia University U.S.A. who says: "In a time when old religious institutions, customs and beliefs are crumbling, while new form of religiosity proliferate, the urgent need for sureness in spiritual discrimination is perhaps best satisfied by Nanak's protest against the religious and the sacred, and his insistence that, in the end, nothing matters except God. In the context of commentary on recent social change, this paper is intended to portray a man, who was grasped by the holy, and led away from the distinctions between religious and secular, and between sacred and profane. In that adventure of Guru Nanak, there lies a profound moral for our time and perhaps, the greatest resources for the redeeming of the times. Nanak found reason and strength in the holy to venture outside, and to venture beyond the temple. Five centuries after his birth, Guru Nanak's life and teachings seem strongly contemporary, their relevance undiminished, and perhaps greater now than hitherto".

Dr. Roma Chaudhri, of R.B. University Calcutta, says "Hence the wonderful creed preached by Guru Nanak is comely creed of Unity and Universality, love and fraternity, bliss and beauty. At a time, when due to external social and political exigencies, real religiosity was being gradually dried up in the scorching heat of bombastic scholasticism, and empty ritualism, Guru Nanak's nectarous message of Viswa-Priti, Visva-Maitri, Visva-Santi, universal love, universal fraternity, universal peace, brought new life and new hope, new joy and new strenght, new enlivenment and new enlightenment to all alike, to their very great good fortune, very great fulfillment, very great felicity".

Any critical eye can see the sublimity and universality of Guru Nanak's philosophy,

Any critical eye can see the sublimity and universality of Guru Nanak's philosophy, provided it is seen, not in the light of any religious prejudice, but in the light of truth. Prof. J.R. Puri of Punjabi University records "Aristotle once said of his great master, 'Plato is too high for the mean to praise him'. Can this verdict not apply on our estimate of Guru Nanak? We often praise him as a great social reformer. We give him credit for producing communal harmony. We attribute to him the abolition of caste distinction. Nanak, no doubt achieved all this to a great extent, but these were incidental results which flowed from his great teachings. He was much greater than what we give him credit for. Those who came in contact with him, imbibed his

teachings and followed his instructions, he gave them insight into the 'nature of ultimate Reality. He gave to them vision of the Supreme Being".

Universal Dharma

These and numerous other opinions of eminent thinkers are indicative of a very hopeful sign, that greater and greater realization, is dawning on human minds about the presence of a Universal Dharma for mankind, a common code of morality and spirituality, in the teachings of Guru Nanak. A question does arise can the main characteristics of Universal Dharma contained in the Adi Granth be described in a brief form, so that it becomes easy for every one to understand even without going through the whole of the big volume? This seems to be a valid question, and it will be very good, if responsible organisations institute a systematic study of the Adi Granth, and competent scholars extract verses on each different subject to be available in handy form. No doubt guidance is available therein on all the different aspects which can be called fundamentals of life.

Guru Nanak's teachings are usually squeezed in a briefest summary constituted by three principles 'Nam Japna', 'Dharam Kirt' and 'Wand Chhakna'. But we can attempt to elaborate them a bit more and couch them in a more general language understandable by widest possible circle of people in the world. Thus stating each of the three principles in two parts, the six basic and fundamental norms forming a universal code for mankind as a whole, could be:

Nam Japna

(1) To remember God as one common Father of all and accept Brotherhood of all mankind.

(2) To practise Truth as basic principle of entire life.

Dharam Kirt

(3) to earn by honest and righteous means. None, with an able body, to eat without earning.

(4) Within ethical bounds to think and act in freedom and allow others to do the same.

Wand Chhakna

(5) To consume one's earnings only after caring for the essential needs of others.

(6) To do unto others as one would wish others to do unto himself.

This can be the New Six-Shastric formula of present age for renaissance of the entire family of mankind. Here is then a great call from Guru Nanak and other saints, who are speaking along with him from the Adi Granth, addressed to all the peoples of the world, to unite in a single bond of righteousness.

"Nanak Naam Charhdi Kala; Tere Bhaane, Sarbat Ka Bhalla".

The author, S. Ishar Singh, a retired under Secretary is an established writer of deep understanding and objective assessment in socio-religious studies

On the third anniversary of November mass

G.S.

Solidarity

THE DELHI RIOTS

Three days in the life of a Nation

UMA CHAKRAVARTI &
NANDITA HAKSAR

It is indeed an ominous comment on the shallowness of struggle for a modern and free India that within four decades of independence the land has come to be ruled by people who are not only ignorant of history but also entertain a kind of pride in that ignorance. The evidence of this crass shallowness is manifest in their response to problems of nation building in India. They have totally forgotten or may be never learnt the most important lesson of India's history. The simple lesson is whosoever wants to destroy India first destroys the solidarity of its people. For some decades this programme of subversion goes on in an apparently harmless manner. Once the divide is driven into the public subconscious mind the ground becomes ready for cultivating a fifth column and nursing it to strength. Then follows the political practice of divide and rule. Power-hunting through this policy some times is contained within the territorial format but more often it breaks the territorial format asunder.

History

In the long and chequered history of the land called India by the western scholars, the periods of fragmentation have far outnumbered the years of unity

and solidarity. Thanks to the cheap kind of politicians who in their quest for power are prepared to destroy anything which stands in their way to power. Ashoka, Akbar, and Dalhousie are a poor minority in comparison to Jai Chands. But great is the spiritual legacy of this land which nurses the solidarity of its people over and over again.

In 1940s this solidarity was threatened yet another time. Most towering among those who stood for unity and solidarity were Mahatma Gandhi and Master Tara Singh. They were however outnumbered by Jaichands and the spiritual unity which was India was torn asunder into two dominions. Master Tara Singh cut down with his sword the separatist flag hoisted by the Muslim league in Lahore. For this daring the Sikhs in the territory now known as Pakistan faced harrowing atrocities at the hands of the league fanatics.

Congress the pretender to the sole proprietorship of nationalism gave a poor account of itself as custodian of the legacy of India when its working committee voted for the partition of British India by a thumping majority lead by Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru. Nehru however, redeemed himself by adhering to a secular and

democratic India. In situations like that of the 1947 one has to be thankful for small mercies.

The Legacy

The legacy which Master Tara Singh stood for was bequeathed by the great Sikh gurus and their Panth. Sikh Panth could not but have an all India orientation. The Sikh gurus were known for their wide-ranging travels across south-Asian lands. The gurus had their followers all through the length and breadth of the country ranging from Khyber to Kamrup. The Tenth Guru Sri Govind Singh was born in Patna (Bihar) he was active in Paonta (Himanchal Pradesh) and Anand Pur (Punjab) and breathed his last in Nander (Maharashtra).

The first five to be ordained into the Khalsa order were elected from an all India sphere. They hailed from Bidar, Rohtak,

examples will make it clear. Kabir belonged to Benaras, Farid hailed from Pakpattan, Bhikhan was a Lucknowi, Dhanna was from Bengal, Ramanad belonged to Maharashtra, and the Sikh gurus were born in Punjab and Bihar.

Skull-duggery

Electoral politics envisaged in the republican constitution of 1950 drew religion into the vortex of politics. Akalis in Punjab opted for the softer option of bidding for power as a religio-political party rather than a regional party. Congress pretended secularism but organised the biggest ever religious spectacle in Punjab. Giani Zail Singh organised the Guru Gobind Singh mahayatra in 1973 with an eye on the Sikh vote in the state. The chief minister of a secular state headed the

position was threatened she resorted to the communal ploy and began projecting the entire Sikh population as bigoted, fanatic and separatist.

She calumniated the Akalis as secessionists forgetting conveniently the fact that she has negotiated with the same Akalis twenty-seven times during the Dharam Yudh morcha. She crossed all bounds of statesmanship when she escalated the conflict with the Akalis from the political to the military plane without giving reasonable chance of retreat to the adversary. Operation Blue-star was a paritsan vendetta which assaulted the dignity of the entire Sikh population. A worst kind of politics of divide and rule was set afoot with total indifference to the interests of the country and the health of the body-politic and society.

Assassination and after

Mr Gandhi fell to assassin's bullets but the policy of divide and rule did not. In the first three days of November 1984 fascist genocide of the innocent citizens was engineered. The executive of the 'secular' state declined to protect the life and liberty of people practising the Sikh creed. The apparent purpose was to deepen the communal divide and consolidate the majority vote for the benefit of the party. Sikh property and persons were put to the torch and it was branded on their memory that the law of the land is not for their protection. Murder and arson got political cover and the politics of divide and rule came perilously close to the politics of divide and destroy.

These destructive manoeuvres are sought to be legitimated with reference to the unity and integrity of the country. The manipulators of this politics forget that territory does not unite a divided people; it is a united people who keep the territory united. Territory is inanimate the people are animate. Unity of a country means nothing if it does not mean the unity and solidarity of its people.

Solidarity

While the partisans of divide and destroy were wrecking the concept of the country as a psychological concept the silver line on the cloud did not disappear. All through the riots non-sikhs protected their Sikh brethren. It will be no exaggeration to say that for every Sikh alive the credit goes to a Himdu or Muslim friend or neighbour. Sh. Prabhu Dayal fell martyr to this cause of saving the victims of violence. Young and old organised themselves instantly into formations like the Nagrik Ekta Manch and did matchless service to relieve and rehabilitate the victims for months on end. Some segments of the administration woke up to their responsibility though late.

The most lasting work was

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DELHI 31 OCTOBER to 4 NOVEMBER 1984 REPORT OF THE CITIZENS' COMMISSION

The Citizens' Commission comprises the following:

JUSTICE S.M. SIKRI	Former Chief Justice of India
SHRI BADR-UD-DIN TYABJI	Former Commonwealth Secretary and Vice-Chancellor, Aligarh Muslim University
SHRI RAJESHWAR DAYAL	Former Foreign Secretary, Visiting Fellow, Oxford University
SHRI GOVIND NARAIN	Former Governor of Karnataka and Home and Defence Secretary
SHRI T.C.A. SRINIVASVARADAN	Former Home Secretary

Puri, Dwarka and Lahore. Now a days these places fall in Karnatka, Haryana, Orissa, Gujrat and Pakistan respectively. The bearers of this legacy could not but have an all India orientation. The Sikhs as a people also lived this legacy in a vibrant fashion. They took up residence in all parts of the country and lived in creative harmony with the non-Sikh population of the country. In the national parlance Sikh became synonymous with bonhomie and good-neighbourly ness.

Despite the wishes of the politicians it could not be otherwise. The Granth whom the Sikhs venerate as their Guru contains poetical meditations of seers spread all through the sub-continent. Some random

greatest ever religious procession in the state. None from the Congress formation raised any questions about it. The Akalis felt that the ground on which they claimed sole right was being snatched by the adversary. Rival saints were patronised by the opposing sides. The flood gates to communalisation of politics were opened in Punjab.

Srimati Indira Gandhi out-did all communalists in communalising matters political and economic. River waters, territory and autonomy for the states were essentially non-communal issues. A non-Communal handling of the same would have nursed the polity towards greater democracy. But democracy was not her forte. When her political

accre it is time to recall the crying shame and stress on solidarity

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Solidarity: Watch word in Guru Granth Sahib

Bhangwant Singh Dalawari

Call to Muslim prayer NAMAZ is given by a Muslim Saint, Baba Farid from the Sikh holy scripture elevated to the status of perpetual Guru by Guru Gobind Singh, our tenth and last Master-in-person. A Maharashtrian saint, Namdev, talks of "JASRATH RAINAND, RAJA MERA RAMCHAND" in expressing devotion. Indeed the galaxy of saints besides Gurus NEVER speak in the whole of the granth of 1430 pages in terms of Sikh, Hindu or Muslim individuality; they loudly and clearly speak of ONE Truth, ONE Purity which is no property of any one sect, but is the heritage of entire HUMANITY. And A Sikh, who calls himself a disciple of Guru Granth Sahib but who is bogged down in fundamentalist separatism does not understand the uniqueness of his Gurus. Look at the message of oneness of Mankind from the mouths of different saints:

*Awal Allah Noor Upaya, Kudrat ke sab bande;
Ek Noor te sab jag upjaya, kaun bhale ko mande (Kabir)*

(First the Lord Himself produced LIGHT and all human beings come from there; When it is the same LIGHT which pervades the whole world, how can one discriminate and say this one is and the other one bad?)

*Koi Bole Ram Ram koi Khudae, Koi seve gusaian koi Allahe
Kau Nanak jin hukam pachchata, prabh sahib ka tin bhed jata.
(Guru Arjan)*

(Some call Him Ram, some others Khuda; some serve Him as Gusain, while others call him Allah..... The truth is that only those people who understand the DIVINE ORDER can know the secrets of the Lord.)

There is thus no SIKH label for the Truth of Humanity. Again even after Guru Govind Singh created the KHALSA, his emphasis remained on the unity of Mankind. "MANAS KI JAAT SABHE EKE PECHANBO (Recognise whole human race as of ONE caste), stressed the tenth Master.

This solidarity is the principal message of Guru Nanak flowing down the experienced messages of all the Gurus and all the Bhaktas included in Guru Granth Sahib. Sometimes I wonder whether Guru Nanak had any intention to found a religion. He dwelt on ONE theme, ANYONE, whether he was a Hindu, a Brahmin, a Muslim, a Vaishnav, a Bhagauti, a Jogi or anyone else, he must be guided by inner Purity, Love and Truth. And it so happened that those who followed him both as followers and later as Gurus continued to carry that message, although the followers were persons of different denominations. When they got solidified into one kind of followers, they came to be known as Sikhs and thus Sikhism and later the KHALSA BROTHERHOOD was established. The hallmark of the Sikh and the KHALSA remained the consolidated whole of a humanbeing, who was termed by Guru Gobind Singh as a saint-soldier FOR THE ENTIRE HUMANITY and not only for the Sikhs themselves.

The theory as dictated by the personified solidarity in Guru Granth Sahib has been evident in practice even in the worst of circumstances. For example, when anti-Sikh carnage had taken the shape of monstrous proportions in November, 1984 through the organised goondaism engineered by the ruling class, it was the common Hindu who came to the help of common Sikh in a human outreach. I know of a family in Sahdara, which had sheltered some Sikhs, refusing to be cowed down by the goondas who threatened to kidnap their daughters if they did not surrender the Sikhs for murder. The family did not care for the consequences in upholding what was RIGHT and HUMAN. Indeed nothing happened to that Hindu family. My own nephew's son, who was manhandled, beaten and taken for dead, by the frenzied mob, was escorted home by a Hindu neighbour, who kept a night-long vigil to ensure the warmth of kindness. And still fresh in my mind is the case of a Sikh home nameplated "B.S. SARIN" which was going to be ransacked by the mob from another locality. Running furiously to meet the mob headlong was the Hindu neighbour clamouring "Have you become mad? Are you going to destroy Hindu homes; this house belongs to Shri Bishan Swaroop". And the mob relented.

But I am not surprised. I am not even extra jubilant. After all I belong to the whole humanity and I see no reason why others should not belong to me. I personally know of many Sikhs who have lived in practice what Guru Nanak taught in Guru Granth Sahib and what has come to us in the theory of splendour. Sternly warns Guru Nanak: SACHON URE SABKO UPPAR SACHACHAR (Everything is below TRUTH, but HIGHER THAN TRUTH is TRUTHFUL CONDUCT). A Sikh of Guru Nanak cannot be considered a Sikh if he does not live in day-to-day conduct the dictates of the Master. In Maharashtra (Amravati), there is a lone Sikh at the service of leprosy patients, none of whom is a Sikh or a

Punjabi. He has been there for 8 years. And if you ask him why he is there, he casually replies in the words of Kabir in Guru Granth Sahib.

*"Kabir kukar Ram kau, mutia mera naon
gale hamare jevari, jein khinche tein jaon"*

(Kabir, I am Ram's dog and my name is Mutia; there is His chain around my neck; wherever He drags me, I follow) He adds that the patients are his family because Guru Granth Sahib's family of saints has no labels. Entire humanity belongs to the Sikh.

Yet another episode. The place is Cairo in Egypt. A Muslim old lady, mother of Mustapha who is a friend of a Sikh posted there, falls sick. Later on she develops a fatal disease and is about to die. She sends for her SIKH son to be by her bedside before she dies. Guru Granth Sahib's glory is not necessarily enhanced only by the glorious references by Pearl Buck or other distinguished international personalities; by the practice of what is contained in the Granth, the Sikh perpetuates the Truth of Humanity. In Paris, I witness a Sikh doing household chores for an old French lady, Madame Coiral. The Sikh is cleaning even her underwears and when she cries unabashedly in having to make him do this, the Sikh, in tears, tells her: "No, Mother, No; this is the instruction of my Guru". Surprisingly, she asks if he is not a Christian and the Sikh replies, "Indeed I am not a Christian but I am just like a Christian for Christ and Guru Nanak are brothers."

In Chandur Bazar, Tadwel and Teosa,—villages in Amravati district, a Marathi daughter wakes up her Sikh father at amritvela and joins him in prayers in Punjabi, Marathi, Gurbani and, above all, in ardas, stressing in bold emphasis: "Nanak-naam chardi kala, tere bhane sarbat ka bhala." The Sikh tells his Marathi children about this sarbat-ka-bhala, but more than what he says is communicated by what he does. Guru Nanak knew that if he were to tell his disciples to care for their own welfare, they would become selfish and narrow, for he knew that welfare too was indivisible. Human solidarity and human welfare cannot suffer from any discrimination. He evolved the concept of Sarbat-ka-bhala, for a Man cannot be happy without making the entire surrounding happy. Today in devotion to Guru Nanak, when a Sikh hears about others' happiness, his inner being is happy for he regards others as his brothers/sisters. In a modest New Delhi home, a Garwali engaged in domestic work, a Sikh rickshaw-driver, an electronics salesman, a blind Hindu Tamilian girl, Punjabi Hindus & Sikhs, sit together in kirtan enjoying literally the bliss of the presence of saints of different places in Guru Granth Sahib symbolised by their own prayer-session.

Where have we gone wrong in understanding the UNAMBIGUOUS message of our Masters? Where have our youngmen found justification in perpetrating the same kind of injustice on innocent people against which we express our annoyance and anger in respect of carnage Nov 84. The senseless violence that rocks Punjab today can NEVER be in justification for or have religious sanction in the killing of innocent people. Indeed the Senseless violence let loose by the State and the absence of rule of law in violation EVEN of the draconian laws can be the stimulant for senseless violence of individuals but where we can never come out clean is in terms of our heritage.

Our youngmen should be more circumspect in projecting violence against innocent persons as a justification for resisting injustice. Our traditions are clear; we can never kill innocents to avenge the killing of innocents. We are saint-soldiers and our Gurus enjoined on us to protect the life and honour of those who cannot defend themselves; our Gurus ensured that in doing our duties as a soldier we should not transgress the rights of people; we were given a mala to recite God's name so that our Kirpan, given to us for defending the tyrannised against tyranny, did not tyrannise itself. And the kirpan was there to remind us that our mala did not make us so inert that the tyrants could have their way.

We shall NEVER be frightened and WE SHALL NEVER FRIGHTEN. With this message of Guru Tegh Bahadur who laid down his life to defend the solidarity of the freedom of worship—even if it was not our way of worship which was under attack—the Sikh should be the living symbol of the inseparability of Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Christian and all others. For, otherwise, we shall unknowingly be disowning our heritage. We commit wrongs only because we do not know ourselves, do not know the meaning of our Masters' message and we do not live that message in our daily life, even if we happened to learn its meaning.



Jara Singh and Sant Fatch Singh: Country First

WHO ARE THE GUILTY?

Report of a Joint Inquiry into the Causes and Impact of the Riots in from 31 October to 10 November

PEOPLE'S UNION FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS
PEOPLE'S UNION FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES
1984

Camouflage

Chandan Negi

The wailing of the air raid siren sent a wave of panic through the town. Lights were switched off, doors closed, shops downed their shutters and in an all pervading air of fright the people, their faces drained of colour, frantically rushed to their homes. All sorts of rumours spread through the town. Heads crowded around paan shops anxious to get some news on the transistor radios. Within minutes the town was steeped in silence: the houses standing silently, heads peeping out of open windows. The sounds were all of the distant blasts of the bombardment, the sabre jets screaming overhead and the ear splitting noise of the anti aircraft guns firing away their rockets. Doors and windows rattled as if shaken by an earthquake.

Every time the danger siren sounded, the voice choked in people's throats and became articulate only when the all clear sounded. And the men and women standing around in darkness, as still as statues, would come back to life. The jeeps, in camouflage, went about making announcements and issuing instructions through loudspeakers and exhorting the people to cooperate in combating the danger of war.

The black night the whole town didn't sleep. In the kitchens, food, pots and pans remained untouched. The sound of shelling shattered the ear drums. The town, perched on the hill, saw the balls of fire flying over it from both sides and in their blinding, bursting light some dark figures somersaulted, tumbled. The bodies of soldiers from this side or the other, were blown apart.

On the road through the town Vijayanta tanks rolled towards the border with soldiers in their dark uniforms standing erect upon them.

Jeeps and armoured cars, in full camouflage, carrying guns and ammunition and full of jawans resounded with cries of 'Jai jawan, Jai kisan'. At various points food and gift packets were being given to the jawans, on whose wrists shone *Rakhis*, knotted tightly, tie pledge and symbol of their guarding the country and protecting their sisters' honour and home.

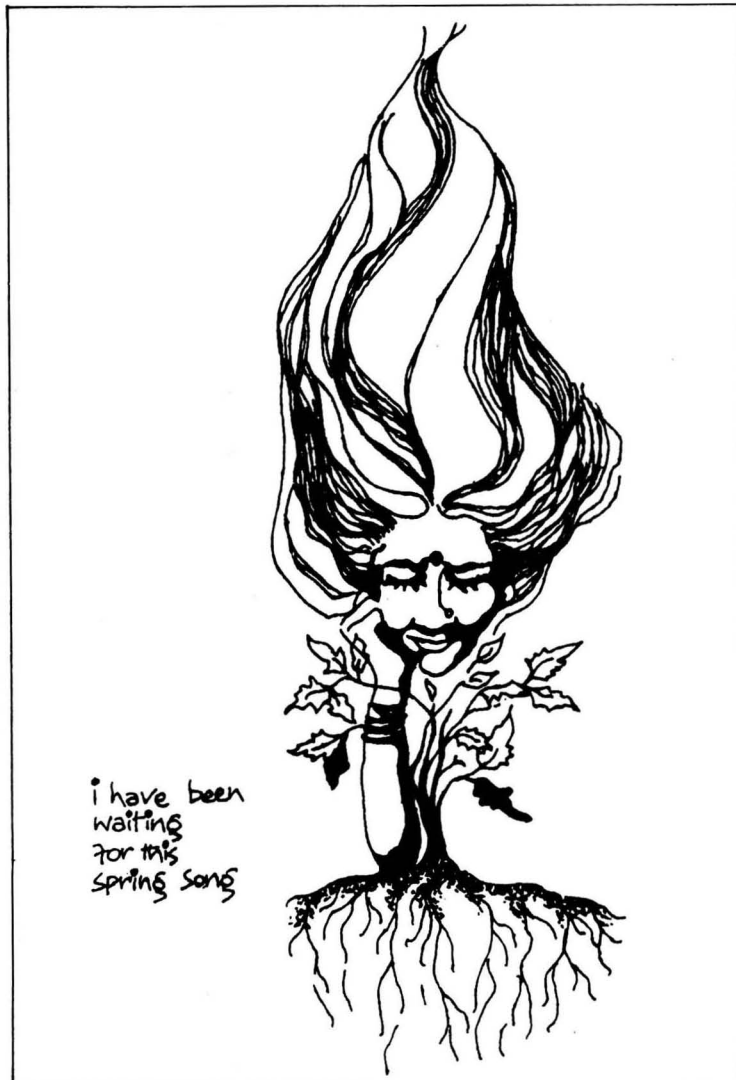
Day in and day out the spectacle of dog fights in the air brought the frightened populace to the rooftops, shouting 'Bo kata'—'There it goes'—when a plane was hit or went down, as if it were some kind of kite flying competition. From the border, the inflow of refugees into the town started.

Camps were set up at various places. But the people of this hill town were fleeing towards the safety of the distant cities of the country.

With great difficulty we managed to get reservations for myself and my two children. The whole day was spent in suspense and predicament, tied to the love of children on the

one hand and love for the husband on the other. Despite the hilly region, the December cold, my throat was dry. I drank glass after glass of water. My eyes would well up on seeing Anand: 'O my dear one, I am alone, alone here!' and a lump would come up my throat.

The station was on a higher level than the town and in the new colony just nearby our house stood out clearly and beyond was visible the high wall of the cinema house. How lovingly we had built our house, brick by brick! How each and every nook and corner we had



The train was to leave at 9 P.M., but we left home while it was still light, gradually giving way to the darkness of the night. At the station there was chaos and a sea of heads all around. It had become dark; only some faint rays escaped through the blackened lights. There was the running of feet from one side to the other, the shadows looming larger and then shrinking. Torches covered with fingers were being flashed on the reservation charts, or on the jostling crowd with piles and piles of luggage trying to find a place in the train—the effort, the noise, the scramble. Then the wail of the siren warbling, rising and falling. Danger? Dark, fair and wheatish faces paled and an eerie silence descended on the station, the silence of the graveyard. The distant sound of bombardment sent down shivers, the children cried the tall poplars bent to cling to each other and the peepul tree shook shedding its leaves.

I dared not look at Anand. Both the children were clinging to his legs frightened.

On the reservation slip outside our compartment the fourth name was Col. Tiwar. And in the compartment two suit cases and a kitbag bearing his name and address were already there. But we hadn't seen any officer in uniform on the platform.

cared for and decorated! In the darkness, from a distance, the other houses looked just a motley of red, gray, yellow, green designs. Wiping tears from my eyes I came out and stood at the door of the compartment. A tall, heavily built, dark complexioned man with a crew cut, round face and thick, negroid lips stood talking to Anand with both hands in his trouser pockets and eyes turned towards the compartment or may be his travelling companions. For the journey, Anand was entrusting us to his care for our needs, comfort, etc., to help us get down at our destination.

The children were still clinging to Anand. I wanted to cling to him too, to run towards our house "Anand, Anand, whatever is to happen, let it happen to all of us together. Can I live there in peace when you will be here all alone? How will you manager?" And Anand only pressed my hand and gave me a pat.

Like a python the train kept on swallowing passengers. The half blackened, half naked station lights made the shadows running about look longer, and weird, a sort of camouflage of their real selves.

One look at Col. Tiwari had sent a shiver down my spine. Oh, how repulsive he looked this my travelling companion. Again the danger siren warbled

In the train and all around at the station darkness settled. I had just sat down when Tiwari also came in. Perhaps he had stumbled in the darkness, he almost fell on me. In a thick, heavy voice he uttered a 'sorry, madam' which hit me like a cannon ball. I almost panicked. He, like a demon almost: the same compartment bolted from inside: the whole night's journey ahead and I alone with this demon of a man....

He fished out a candle from his bag and lighted it with his cigarette lighter. "A smoker has at least this advantage," he laughed and lit a cigarette himself. The flame of the candle fluttered in the whiff of wind and my shadow trembled along with it on the compartment walls.

The train whistled softly and began to crawl. Anand walked a few paces alongside and repeated his last minute instructions which he had earlier given a dozen times. But I was hardly listening. With my finger nails I scratched love on his palm. The train picked up speed and left behind Anand, my home, my town and the boom of guns and the flaming shells flying on either side.

"Shall I close the door?" Tiwari's voice struck again.

"No, no, the children may need to go to the toilet," I was almost panic stricken.

Just then the ticket checker came in. I breathed a bit more freely.

"You are Col. Tiwari. And these your wife and children?"

At first I hesitated, then burst out, "Kindly look up your chart first."

Tiwari showed his ticket and looked at me curiously. The ticket checker didn't look up after consulting his chart, just mumbled a 'sorry' and went out.

When I served food to the children, out of formality I invited Tiwari to join us. With a sigh, rather heavy, he said, "Sure, we people yearn for home food and Punjabi food, oh, how delicious!" In the course of the meal he told us that he was posted at Bagdogra, Assam, that he had come home on annual leave which had been cancelled in this emergency and then he had been recalled to his duty. It looked as if he was finding it difficult to eat, leave alone relishing the Punjabi food.

He played with the children, gave them toffees and seemed to be enjoying himself. He talked of many things. After a while the children started dozing. I opened a book and hiding my face behind it was even turning the pages, feigning to be deeply absorbed in it. But was I really reading? From the pages of the book would stare at me his dark and repulsive face. The whole night, the bolted door, the children asleep and he...The very thought made my hair stand on end. Frightened to the bone I came out. For a long time I stood outside peering through the window at the parallel tracks running along side a its sleepers flitting past. The cold air was far from soothing. Even so I felt like standing there all night. All the compartments had their doors closed. Only I was there, alone, and the attendant had looked me up twice. Perhaps he sensed my anxiety, "Mrs Anand, please sleep comfortably. I shall wake

you up in the morning before your station comes."

I felt somewhat embarrassed and went back inside. My hands slipped on the bolt and the door remained ajar. I sat down on my seat in a half reclining position. By now both the children were sleeping soundly on the upper berths. The train attendant came once again to remind me to bolt the door.

I was awake: he was awake. I was silent, frightened: he was silent, God knows what thoughts occupied his mind. I stood up and gulped down two glassfuls of water and wiped the sweat off my brow many a time. I once again came out of my compartment. What could I do? For how long could I stand outside? So I went inside, switched off the compartment light, by down on my berth and switched on the night bulb near my head. On his berth he lay with one arm over his eyes. Was he feigning sleep? Chanting Kirtan sohila the night prayer, my voice and words trailed on to 'Japji' the morning prayer and then 'Jaap Sahib'; and my eyes strayed on to the compartment walls, his pistol hanging on the hook and then on to the handle of the safety chain and to the inscription above it 'To stop train, pull chain'.

Then I remembered the knife in my hand bag, a very sharp, folding knife, fumbling through the bag as if looking for something I took out the knife, opened it and stealthily put it under my pillow. As a last resort, a drowning man clutching at a straw. With my hand under the pillow I clutched the knife handle and turned on my side to sleep. Whether he too turned on his or not but he was awake. A slight rustle of the sheets and I gripped the handle tighter. All kind of thought flashed through my mind. 'He might have drugged my children—How soundly they slept!...If at all he so much as even touched me I would plunge the knife into his belly...he would stagger and fall down, wounded and in pain...I will pull his hair and scratch his face with my finger nails and jump up to pull the safety chain, the handle of which was swinging and occasionally struck against the compartment wall. Suddenly our eyes met. His seemed to be mocking, "The safety chain? Do you know how much force is required to pull it? And what about my pistol?"

In the darkness my wise awake eyes kept frowning at the ceiling....If...if he got up, tried to do something, I shall pull the chain. Everyone will curse him. Are these the guardians of the country, sacrificing their lives fighting on the borders to protect the honour of women, their mothers, sisters," and such a dastardly immoral act? What a shame! And I; like abvoe with feathers plucked, hair in disarray and half-draped sari would be cringing in a corner. And immersed in these thoughts my heart beat faster than even the clattering of wheels below on the rails. The train kept on running but the moments only crawled and I gazed at the night bulb with wide awake eyes. How could I sleep? I knew he wasn't asleep. If I slept...Just then Tiwari turned. 'He is awake. Why

doesn't he sleep? Is he waiting for me to sleep and then, and then....

The children were fast asleep. Tiwari's face was turned towards me. In the glow of the night bulb, his face had a frightening pallor about it. The big eyes looked redder. Was it the pallor of sadness or was it the glow of desire, of passion? hardly three feet or may be found separated our berths. Both his hands were placed on his chest which rose and fell with each breath that he took. I covered my face with the blanket. The sound of his footsteps were heard, I tightened my grip on the knife handle. But the door opened and he had gone outside. he came in and bolted the door. It sat against the window. He said, "You may please sleep. I shall look after the children and wake you up. I can't sleep while travelling anyway. I have as yet to spend the following night also. And then the Front. You can't imagine what it's like there. Days and nights just get mixed up. Such is the life of a soldier!"

"Villain, scoundrel," my lips trembled without speaking. "Trying to hoodwink me? I will tear you alive. I know if I sleep you will take advantage." I just dozed off with such thoughts. Was it a horrible dream? Bombs falling, our house enveloped in flames. No, not the house any more, just the walls, no roof, no doors, no windows, and Anand. Anand shouting 'Sati.' Satinder and lying on the bed, wounded, flying towards the sky. Darkness, smoke, screams, panic. I woke up with a jolt. My breath was coming faster. I was drenched in perspiration. Sweat flowed from my forehead on to my blouse. I got up, ruffled the hair of my fast asleep Gagan, kissed his cheeks and pressed him to my bosom.

Perhaps Tiwari sensed my inner fears, "You are away from the border, away from the war. We people are always in the thick of it, faced with death. We people also have families." I listened silently. Then he said how strange it was that whenever there was fighting on any border the soldiers staked their lives to save it, to save the towns, property and people, but the people instead of helping combat the danger run away from the cities. You know, this is hardly an encouragement to a soldier's morale. A fighting soldier aims at defeating the enemy or dying for his country. The more he kills, the braver he is. In the field of battle he is oblivious of his home, family, parents."

I felt somewhat ashamed. I too was leaving my husband, my home and running away from my town. My town was in the thick of battle. On one side our forces had forged ahead, on another flank the enemy had made inroads. I too should have performed some duty for my country. Tiwari sensed my feeling. "Well, Mrs Anand, how do you like Army life?"

"Very good. Especially the discipline among officers, their manners, etiquette."

He burst out laughing, "Is that all? What about family life?"

"But you enjoy yourself at peace stations."

"Yes. Er, well, your destination is far yet. You better sleep. I shall wake you up."

A few passing moments of drowsiness and the grip on the handle had loosened. Again I tightened the grip and lay down with eyes closed. Again the sound of footsteps and I looked surreptitiously with half closed eyes. Tiwari was adjusting the blankets on the children and covering them properly. Then he came and stood near my feet. I gripped the handle tighter. He lifted the blanket, hanging down and trailing on the floor, and covered my feet. Finally going back to his seat, he switched on his head lamp and started writing something.

When I dozed off to sleep or when morning came I didn't know. Tiwari was shaking me by the feet when I awoke. "Please, Mrs Anand, get up. It's morning," The children were sitting on his seat. Moradabad had come and gone. One was holding a Moradabadi peacock while the other had an ornamental flower vase in his hand. With a frown I shaped my hand into a slap. Meekly, both the children proffered to return the gifts. "No, no, Mrs Anand, I have myself bought these for the children, a token of my love for them. My own two children are just their age, just like them. I couldn't even be with them enough. I couldn't play with them enough to be happy with them." His heavy voice betrayed anguish enough.

I stood like a statue, hardly able to utter a word.

The train slowed down to a stop and Col. Tiwari himself carried our luggage through the corridor and out on the platform. Far away from the border people here seemed quite unconcerned, quite oblivious of the boom of guns or air raid sirens. The station platform was the usual hustle and bustle as if nothing had happened, no state of emergency in any part of the country existed.

"Bless us sister, so that we win," Col. Tiwari said in all humility.

And I felt as if he, standing erect in his dark soldier's uniform on the black tank in full camouflage, were going to the front to face and fight the enemy. Killing and piling up dead bodies he himself might become just one of them. Or with grenade in hand, destroying enemy tanks he might himself be crushed under one, or blown to pieces. Or else flying the tricolour in the vanguard, the bravest soldier of them all, his chest glittering with decorations of many colours.

Col. Tiwari hand respectfully bowed his head. I placed my hand on his shoulder, "God bless you with a long life. Come and stay with us sometime." And writing our name and address on his notebook I was thinking which part of me was a camouflage, the one now standing on the platform before him, or the one earlier lying on the berth in the train compartment.



Two Punjabi Poems

by Sukhbir

CITYSCAPE

*In this city
Every when on the walls
are naked women
or the sounds of revolvers
sunk in the colour of blood...
walls covered with posters
everyone sees them.*

*In this city
there are also places
other than walls
where naked women wander
and the rumbling of their stomachs
is Sunk in the hungers
no one sees them.*

Add-B/19-sun & sea, Versora Id., Bombay-61

PORTRAIT

*A face of a child
which is nothing but two eyes
two swimming lamps in turbid water*

*A face with lost features
whose dried up lips
had licked many a hunger*

*On this face
is a darkness of time
A thought alive
in the world of graves*

*Children (they say)
are flowers
are moons
but what a face is this!
A face without a future
a dried leaf
fluttering in the desert.*

The Akal Takhat

It is painful to see the present controversy engulfing Sri Akal Takhat Sahib. Defiance of its authority by Sikhs themselves is dangerous and suicidal for the community which is spread world over.

Guru Arjan Dev Ji himself founded the religious centre of the Sikhs—The Darbar Sahib. And while going to river Ravi—from where he was not to return—he sent a message through five Sikhs to his son (Bal) Hargobind: "Let him sit fully armed on his throne and maintain an army to the best of his ability". 'Khushwant Singh—History of Sikhs (vol. 1). He asked Baba Budha to make a soldier saint out of him.

Incidentally Baba Budha was the first Jathedar of Akal Takhat, while Bhai Gurdas was the first head priest Granthi of Harimandar Sahib. According to Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha—Akal Takhat is the centre of Sikh Organisation. Mr. Niharranjan Ray and also Jagjit Singh say: "Akal Takhat, a seat of temporal authority, as distinct from the place of worship alone, and set up two flags fluttering before it, one distinctly signifying religious and other temporal authority."

There cannot be more than one 'Centre' of any authority. The other Takhts which came into being subsequently are centres to look after the regional affairs of the Sikhs. It is only the Akal Takhat from where edict—Hukamname—for the entire Sikh community can be issued. The jathedar acting under guidance and perimeters laid down by the "Granth Panth" may consult the other Jathedars. But the Jathedar must be a man of faith,

knowledge and integrity. As Guru Nanak says, it is only one who is fit may sit on throne.

In matters of organisation priests-granthis are not to be involved. Their duties are limited to attending to and serving the Granth Sahib. It is clear from the facts that 'Maryada'-code of conduct for Harimandar Sahib and Akal Takhat are different.

It was only with the Guru Sahibs that authority of Miri and Piri rested in one. After that the Jathedar and the Priests had separate roles.

It was Akali Phoola Singh Jathedar of the Akal Takhat, who led the Sikhs in the battlefield not the head priest of Harimander Sahib.

These other Takhts were created by the Panth. Patna Sahib which is the second Takhat had already become an important centre for the Sikhs much before the Tenth or even the Ninth Guru. This is borne out by Hukam—Namas issued by the Sixth Guru himself where he addressed the Sangat of 'East' as 'Khalsa'.

Guru Angand Dev ji established 22 "Manjis", seats of religious preaching but none can be equated with Harimander Sahib. Harimandar Sahib remains the supreme religious seat.

It is worth noting that nowhere else expect in front of Harimandar and Akal Takhat do we find two identical Nishan Sahibs: Symbols of Miri and Piri.

Further we see that all the subsequent Takhts are named after the towns where in these are located. Only at Amritsar do we find the Takhat being named "Akal"—all prevailling-beyond

death.

It is very significant that it was this Akal Takhat which was the target of attack both by words and bullets before, during and after Operation Blue-Star. It is the Sikh organisation that is under attack.

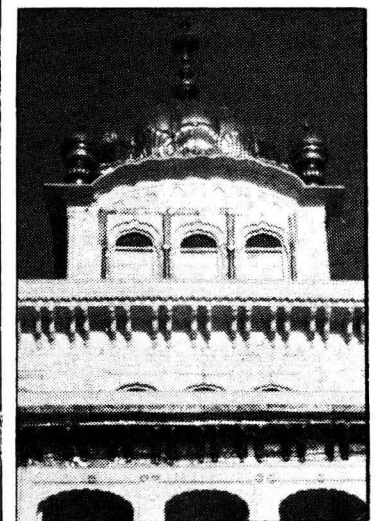
Ironically it is the same Akal Takhat from where Jathas during British rule used to pray and go for morchas and sacrifices.

The Sikhs must remember that no individual can be equated with Sri Akal Takhat Sahib. And non-Sikhs should remember that it was the spirit and sword infused bestowed by the founder of this Akal Takhat that had cut the shackles of slavery and turned the tide of invading hordes coming across the appropriately called Hindu Kush.

Akalis with the base desire for power have already rendered Akali Dal irrelevant to Panjab. It is time that they realized the importance of the institution of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib.

—Ashok Singh

Bhai of Bagrian



Credit For The Rural Poor Emergence Of New Exploiters A Survey, II

Hazari Singh Pankaj

The lead bank of Banda district is Allahabad Bank. This bank has opened 83 branches in rural areas in the name of Tulsi Gramin Bank (Tulsi Rural Bank). There are a dozen branches of Tulsi Rural Bank in Patha area. The Kols of Patha owe nearly Rs. 15 million to these banks. It appears as though combing all institutional loans the Kols must be indebted to the extent of about Rs. 40 million.

Loans under government schemes for the rural poor such as IRDP, Trysem and special component are given through these rural banks.

Under the special component loans were given to Kols for shops near Manikpur block headquarters. Only a small part of the loan for running shops actually reached the Kols, the rest was gobbled by officials. Today the shops are closed the Kols are running around avoiding recovery.

Influential people have forced Kols to take loans again and again under the various schemes. In Char village the Pradhan asked his servant Bhola S/o Chaita to take a loan from Echwarra Cooperative Society for purchasing a buffalo. Then he forced him to take a loan from Tulsi Bank for a cloth shop and then again from Echwarra society for purchasing goats. Then he beat up Bhola and forced him to leave the village, also cornering the land distributed to him.

The motivate them to take more and more loans the Kols are assured by influential men that later all loans will be written off.

Sitaram and Bodhan of Parariya village were lured into applying for loans of Rs. 3000 each for grocery shops. However, goods worth only Rs. 1500 each were given to them.

In Bambiha village the buffalo given to Jhalla Kol under IRDP can be seen in another person's house. The Gram Sevak filled up forms for loans to Bhondla and Mangli Kols Chamrauha village for loans for bullocks, they didn't get the bullock but the recovery has come nevertheless. Hublal Kol of the same village is left saddled with a fictitious loan of Rs. 425 for fertiliser he never got.

Mahadev Kol of Gurva was sanctioned, bullocks worth Rs. 2500 but only got calves worth Rs. 800 Rajendra Kol of Ooncha Dib and Kaira and Lal ji of Bajha were given battery-less, loudspeaker worth Rs. 3000 each.

Chotey Lal Mavaiya of Dadri village took a loan some years back for purchasing goats but couldn't return it. This year again Rs. 3000 was sanctioned with subsidy component. He used a part of it to return the previous loan a part as a bribe and a part to meet some expenses.

Under the IRDP 13 goats are given against Rs. 3500 but under Bounded labour

rehabilitation scheme against the sanctioned grant of Rs. 5500 only 12 goats are being given.

In Kota Kavaila village (Patrakar Raram) the recovery official auctioned the bollocks of Sachi Lal, Sanna and Shivprasad Kol (given under IRDP) worth Rs. 2500 for Rs. 1100 and also beat them after tying them to trees. What is more, he did not deposit the money. The loudspeakers worth Rs. 3000 belonging to Rajkaran Kol was auctioned for Rs. 500 Buchaiya of village Kataiyya Khadar was stripped by the recovery official for failure to return I.R.D.P. loan and taken around the village. He felt so insulted that he committed suicide the same night (July 21, 1987). Even after this tragically the official took away his bullocks. Kaira Kol and Lal ji Kol of Vajha Kolan settlement were beaten up by the recovery official, Rs. 1000

from Kaira and Rs. 580 from Lal ji were taken but no receipts were given.

In Sakrauha officials carried away the school bag of Bhauri's



son asking do you want to make your son a collector.

An entire group of corrupt persons is prospering around the credit schemes for the rural

poor—the small time leaders, the middlemen, the vet. doctors, the insurance agents, the bank officials, the block level officials etc. These credit schemes are

mainly benefiting them, not the poor. (concluded)

Environmental Ruin in Chitrakoot

Satya Narain Mishra

The famous pilgrimage resort of Chitrakoot is located in Bundelkhand region. At the administrative level it is spread over a part of Banda district of Uttar Pradesh and a part of Satna district of Madhya Pradesh. In recent years deforestation as well as stone quarrying and crushing, the former to a substantial extent caused by the latter, have led to the degradation and ecological ruin of the area.

Amidst allegations of pollution, lung diseases among workers and destruction of the beautiful landscape, the district administrations have orders for the closure of the stone units but to obstruct this a stay order was obtained from the High Court.

Denuded hills are on eyesore, of course, but in addition this deforestation also appears to have adversely affected the local climate (making it drier) and reduced the rainfall (reducing it and making it more erratic). Precipitation is getting lessor if annual figures are taken but now it comes more in heavy torrents.

This leads to heavy erosion and sandy deposits in fields, running their fertility. Several villages such as Bharatpur Bharthaul, Pathrauri, Raipurva, Daphai, Taraon, Vihara etc. are located just below the denuded hills. Paddy cultivation has now become a difficult here. Farm productivity has declined to low levels.

The canal from Baruwa dam near Raipurwa is saturated with sand almost every year. Engineering efforts to stop this have not succeeded.

Future blasting work in the already heavily quarried Bharat Kup-Shivrampur area can gravely endanger the villages below-apart from also posing a threat to the buses or other vehicles passing on the roads near the hills.

The eroded soil and the dust from crushers has led to several health problems relating to eyes and lungs among workers and local people. The low paid workers cannot afford timely health treatment and are driven towards a slow death or else their health is so ruined that they are rendered incapable of leading a normal life. Noise pollution has also adversely affected the hearing ability of some people.

Several useful medicinal plants have almost vanished from several of these hills (these include aanvla, neem, babul, punnava, bhangra, lisore, shankh pushpi, sahijan, swaranashriri and Pavaand) adversely affecting the village-level cheap or free medicare.

Nearly 2000 workers are estimated to be employed in around 47 crushers in this area. Some of them are not free to work in other crushers. This employment is of irregular nature with occasional periods of unemployment.

Crusher owners have become extremely rich but the

workers continue to lead a wretched existence, earning Rs. 10 to 12 a day in highly hazardous work. Revenue gain to the government is also meagre nothing compared to what it will have to spend to repair even a part of the environmental ruin caused by the indiscriminate quarrying and crushing work. Some of the largest-scale work during this decade has been done illegally on hills where this work had been banned.

Workers are kept on daily wages and denied paid holiday, insurance, bonus, provident fund and other such facilities. Accidents are frequent but these are generally hushed up without coming to public notice.

In view of the large-scale damage already done this work has to be checked and the workers given employment in afforestation and other forest-workers given employment in afforestation, and other forest-works in nearby forests where there is a lot of potential for employment if proper planning is done.



संचेतना

संचेतना उपहार में दीजिए इससे उनके पास प्रति मास आपकी प्यार भरी याद पहुंचेगी। इसे भरकर हमारे पास भेजिए।

महोदय,
निम्न लिखित व्यक्ति/व्यक्तियों को चेरी और से संचेतना एक वर्ष/तीन वर्ष/आजीवन/के लिए भेजिए पत्रिका का शुल्क मनीआर्डर/चेक/ड्राफ्ट द्वारा भेज रहा हूँ।

व्यवस्थापक,
संचेतना (मासिक)

एच-108, शिवाजी पार्क

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नाम

पूरा पता

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शुल्क : एक वर्ष 40 रु. तीन वर्ष

100 रु., आजीवन 500 रु.

Religion has shaped the beliefs, values and attitudes of people in India over the centuries and to a great extent this is true even now. Religion as conceived and religion as practiced through rituals and dogmatic interpretation shows its historical transition from its initial spirituality to social, economic-political vested interests. Arun Shourie attempts to

reforming the state, of restoring to its norms, probity, accountability. Till our people understand that what we are witnessing today is a direct result of the perversion of the state, of the politics of the last decade—be it the politics of Indira Gandhis, of the Akalis, the Opposition, or the Bhinderanwalas—we will not even make a beginning towards

because those who accept the divinity of the tradition appeal to faith and not to reason and evidence, and those who take an historical view of things do not suffer the affliction which Shourie sets out to contain and cure. The problem is a part of the larger issue of rationalism Vs religion but Shourie somehow is committed to save religion and yet seeks to reject

pollicial significance of the secular anchorage of the Akali communalism-----the territorial adjustments, Chandigarh and the sharing of River waters. He also fails to see how Mrs Gandhi communalised the entire tension between a regional aspiration and the central government. Neither does he see the ambiguity---the peril and the promise of the Akali

they have proclaimed will end our existence as a secular and democratic country, indeed as a single country itself. The Accord has not secured from the Akalis any commitment on the implications of these objectives, nor on how far and by what means the Akali Dal will pursue them. Finally, by sending the Anad Pur Sahib resolution to Justice Sarkaria,

Book Review

No Religion and Little Politics

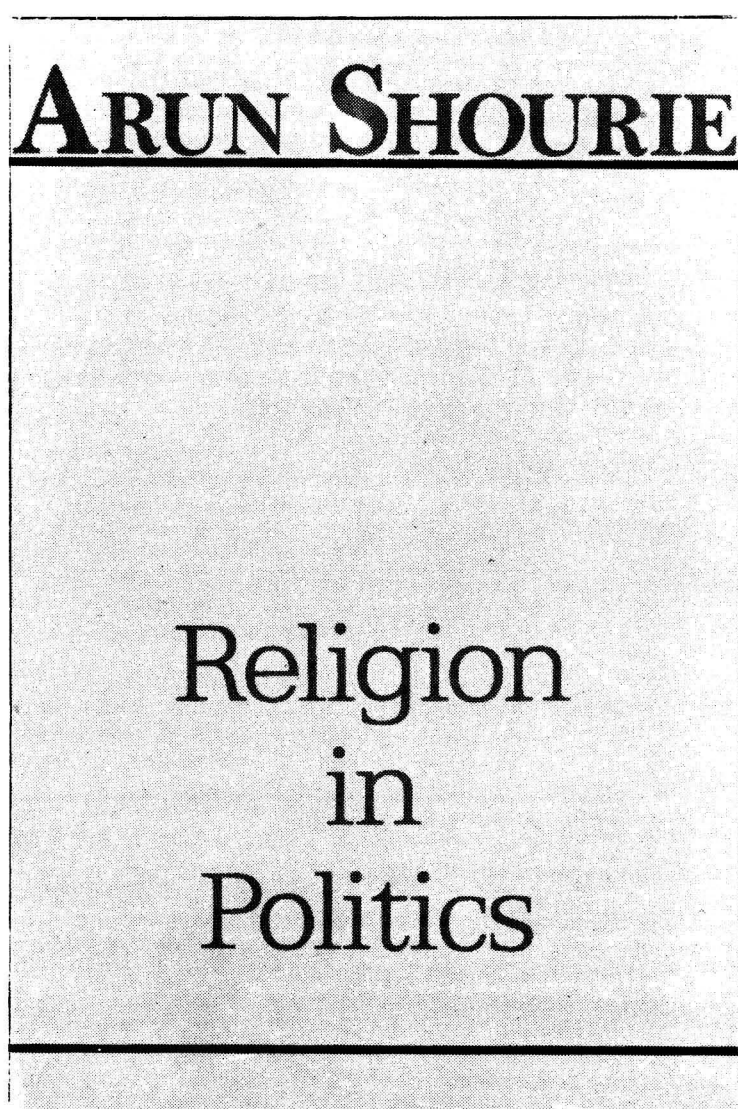
Religion In Politics by Arun Shourie, New Delhi, Roli Books, 1987, PP334, Rs. 95.00

analyse this aspect in view of the recent experiences in India.

The book is a collection of articles of the author written during the period 1983-1986. The essays range over diverse areas of interest and focus on widely different problems. In spite of the efforts to give a catchy caption and consolidation into one volume the reader finds it difficult to apprehend the unity of theme which persuaded the author to believe that all of them put together will make a coherent volume. We have no choice but to examine the content of the volume in compartments and then to comment on the entire performance.

In chapter 9, "Killings Communalism, Foreign Hand and Art Paper," Shourie exposes meticulously "the total bankruptcy of the state apparatus" and remarks "even the death of thousands has taught our leaders nothing." He tears the "strategy of Mrs. Gandhi and Co" to bits through meticulous detail and painstaking argument in favour of democracy and voice of the people. In these three essays the object of criticism is the defect of character of the bureaucrats and their political patrons, particularly the Cong (I) led by Mrs Gandhi. There are occasional hints at the policy of divide and rule adopted by Mrs Gandhi and her minions. He writes, "The electoral strategy of the party was the familiar one: isolate the largest group, gather together the other groups, foment insecurity in them, then present yourself as the only available protector". This is not a strategy but stratagem and clearly belongs to the category of defects of character albeit of the highly placed ones like Mrs Gandhi.

The essays in chapters 1 and 5 of the book 'On Taking Offence' and 'Them Vs Us' respectively are a criticism of the faults of the milieu. In these essays the author urges his countrymen into an honest, free and frank discussion of issues like the content of religion, communalism, social reform and the implications of the democratic experiment for all of us. He comes heavily on those who create a divide out of every debate and appeal to injured communal sentiment to take the matter to the streets on the slightest provocation. Shourie insists, we must first cauterise the violence. To the extent that Punjab, Bhiwandi, Bombay, Delhi are communal, we must educate the people about what they portend.....Second, there is the whole question of



salvaging our affairs.....All groups—e.g. the religious minorities—must see that their security lies not in this leader or that, but in proper functioning of the institutions of the State. (P. 150).....The singular guarantee for the rights and privileges of all groups is that the rights and privileges of the average individual citizen be fully enforced. But over the last few decades, group after group have come to focuss more and more on the rights and privileges they can secure as members of a group, rather the rights and privileges that should be available to every citizen qua citizens. (P. 151) All groups must see that their advancement, interest and security are best ensured, not by making deals with this or that leader, but by strengthening the institutions of the State. (p. 152)

Chapter 2, 'Your Wives are Your Fields' is study of Islamic tradition and seeks to demonstrate the historicity of the same. The author examines the different sources of the tradition and locates them in their specific historical origin and evolution. The prolonged excursus into the vast literature is in a sense besides the point

the divinity of scriptures which is the first article of faith with the believers. He like most of the rationalists is on the Kafir side. The essay brings out very clearly the less than equal status of the muslim women and the anachronistic defence of the same by the so called defenders of the faith. This theme is carried forward in chapter 3, 'The Muslim Women's Bill'. The whole sequence related to Shah Bano case is meticulously examined and the Pusallinimity of the Rajiv Gandhi government, committed to the 21st century slogan, is brought out.

'The Pistol Jinnah Forged' (chap 7) and 'Lessons from Punjab' (chap 4) are written with the intention of inuring the knights to hold fort against the assaults of Akali communalism. In the heat of exhortation to ride out against the assault Shourie forgets to ask what the knights should guard. They may mount guard over an autocracy and a family fiefdom which India has become since D.K. Baruah coined the slogan Indira is India.

Shourie's obsession with Akali communalism disables him from appreciating the

agitation. The Akalis could have been humbled without communalising and militarising the struggle if Mrs Gandhi had opted for that.

One example will suffice. The Akalis had worked hard to create a Sikh-majority Punjab and has got it demarcated to suit their power strategies. They raked up territorial issues only for political mobilization. Any proposal to enlarge Punjab to their electoral detriment would have made them run for life. They would have proclaimed it as yet another victory of the Panth and a humiliating defeat of everybody else is another matter. Victory is their birthright and nobody can snatch it away from them. Any government taking upon itself the impossible task of humbling all regional aspirants to power in India, bites more than it can chew. Instead of reinforcing the regional character of the Akali agitation Mrs Gandhi chose to reinforce its communal character and thus compounded the problem and sowed the dragon seeds in the national compound. One wonders why Shourie, the author of the sentence-----"the electoral strategy of the party was....to foment insecurity and then presnet yourself as the only available protector" p 217-fails to see the same strategy at work in Punjab where the Hindu bourgeoisie was foolish to dissociate from their region and chose Mrs. Gandhi as the only available protector. Much water has flown under the bridges since then but it is clear to all concerned that the only way out of the present mess is through the assertion of a composite Punjabi identity and regional dispersal of power. The Punjab accord was a step in that direction but Shourie has reservations about that as well.

In 'The Accord in the Light of Secular Principles' (chap 6) Shourie lists the following objections to the Memorandum of Settlement signed by the Prime Minister of India Shri Rajiv Gandhi and S. Harchan Singh Longowal in July 1985. "First, the very signing of the Accord lifts an out and out communal party to the status of an equal of the Government of India. Second, the Accord has not settled any of the matters of principle that the Akali rhetoric of the last five years has thrown up. Third, the Akalis remain completely free to pursue in the next round what they have not acquired in this; their objectives transcend specific issues such as who gets Chandigarh or what happens to river waters; quite the contrary---the goals

the Accord puts a matter of life and death dangerously in the hands of one man; instead of settling the issues the Accord has thus planted a time bomb". (p. 156)

On reading these objections one is driven to wonder if it is the rationalist Shourie speaking or some official of Changez Khan theorising about one centralized empire trembling in the awe of the great emperor the scourage of mankind. He does not mince words, "The rule should be to nail down everyone" p159. Moderates as well as others must be nailed down on matters of Principle and never concede to a moderate that you will deny to an extremist".

If it is a question of affirmation of principle the Anadpur Sahib resolution affirms all the holy notions like the unity and integrity of India, the consolidation of the Indian democracy and the rights and liberties of mankind. In short it reiterates all the principles dear to Shourie. Yet it is an indefensible document because it envisages a degree of decentralization unknown to all the federations of the world. Akalis drafted it as an instrument of power capturing in a situation of competitive vote catching. It remained of no consequence for ten long years. It became a subject of discussion only with the stiffening of stances in the eighties.

Communalism receives a number of thunderbolts from Shourie but the book does not even make a serious attempt to understand it. Communalism is not a defect of character or a fault in the mulieu. These traits of communalism and its flare up is as a kind of politics. Communalism is politics: cynical power politics conducted in calculated ways by those in power and those out of power. It has become handy for three principal purposes. First, vote catching, second, for the diversion of substantial demands like that of justice and progress after forty years of independence, and thirdly for legitimating the authoritarian structure of power which has been nursed for some decades by the vested interests.

The struggle against communalism is therefore entwined with struggle for a more just and equitarian order of things in this country. How many will go the whole hog in this struggle is yet to be ascertained by the future course of events.

A.S. Narang

Court enquiry finds "terrorist" innocent

Amritsar, Oct 28—The District Magistrate, Mr Sarbjit Singh, has accepted the findings of a magisterial enquiry into the killing of Sardool Singh, allegedly by the police. The report has rejected the police version.

In his 13-page report, written in Gurmukhi, Subdivisional Magistrate S P Mahajan has maintained that Sardool Singh was neither a terrorist nor their harbourer. He was not involved in any case, much less regarding terrorist activities.

Mr Mahajan has recommended that the widow of the deceased, Mrs Kulwant Kaur, should be paid the compensation that a victim of a terrorist crime is entitled to which includes a government job for an eligible member of the family.

The report has rejected the police version of the incident on four counts. It has rejected the police claim that it recovered a 32-countrymade pistol from the body of Sardool Singh and no live cartridge. Would anyone go about with a weapon without any ammunition, it has questioned.

According to the F.I.R., the man on the pillion of Sardool Singh's scooter (PUO 6254) had fired and managed to escape. If that was the case, the report says, how come no empties were recovered?

The third point over which the report has expressed doubts is the "bullet" which killed police constable Sukhdev Singh in the incident. The doctor who wrote the medico-legal report has disputed the police claim that the constable had died as a result of a bullet from a 32 pistol.

The report has also rejected the police claim that the bodies of Sardool Singh and Sukhdev Singh were found at a distance of 25 to 30 yards from each other. It says the firing took place at a "corner or a turning" in Sant Nagar from where the two could have easily managed to run at least 200 to 300 yards.

The report has recommended that an officer of the rank of at least a Superintendent of Police

should be deputed to further investigate into the incident.

Mr Mahajan has held that the papers pertaining to the scooter driven by Sardool Singh on that fateful night were in order. No terrorist would use his on a scooter for committing a time. It has recommended that the scooter (No PUO 6254) be restored to the family.

Residents of Anand Nagar, where Sardool Singh lived, had impressed upon the District Magistrate that Sardool Singh was innocent.

Interestingly, the report says, "no public witness" came forward to depose before the enquiry officer, perhaps, "out of fear" of the police. Even the police witnesses examined by the Magistrate were all those who formed the escort of the Superintendent of Police (City).

All residents in the Sant Nagar area, who were a witness to the incident, were approached by the police to either depose in its favour or keep away.

Meanwhile, CPI leader Satyapal Dang, has brought to the notice of the Director-General of Police, Mr J.F. Ribeiro, yet another case of police "excesses". In his letter to the police chief he has sought the dismissal of the Station House Officer of Majitha police station.

The incident relates to an AITUC activist, Balkar Singh, a resident of Bal Khurd village who was kept in illegal confinement by the SHO on September 13 after being summoned to the police station.

During his detention, Balkar Singh was "tortured" and was let go only on the intervention of SP Rajinder Singh on September 19.

Mr Dang has alleged that Balkar Singh was detained at the instance of his employer as he was leading a strike in his mill.

The police again summoned him on October 9 and informed him that a case of "robbery" was pending against him.

Mr Dang said Balkar Singh had disappeared and those who had seen him had reported that he had gone insane.

Anti Democratic and anti Religion

The Sikh Forum has expressed its concern for the decay of Sikh traditions by some vested interests. In a press note dated 23 October it expressed; The Sikh Forum deprecates the tendency of some people to arrogate to themselves the right to take decision regarding the whole community. In dismissing Professor Darshan Singh and appointing S Gurbachan Singh Manochahal as the Jathedar of the Akal Takhat, the Panthic Committee has done precisely what it had no right to do.

In essence, the Punjab situation is getting curiouse

and curiouse. The government claims credit for having sabotaged a meeting of the Sarbat Khalsa overlooking the fact that it was the central government itself which revived the system of the Sarbat Khalsa in 1984 after its having fallen into disuse for over a century and a half.

The Panthic Committee which has no democratic sanction what so ever behind it presumes to decide for the whole community. What it has done not only disgraces the Akal Takhat, it also raises fundamental question with regard to how the Gurdwaras

are to be managed. For over sixty years the right of democratic self-government by the Sikhs was duly exercised but now that right is sought to be subverted.

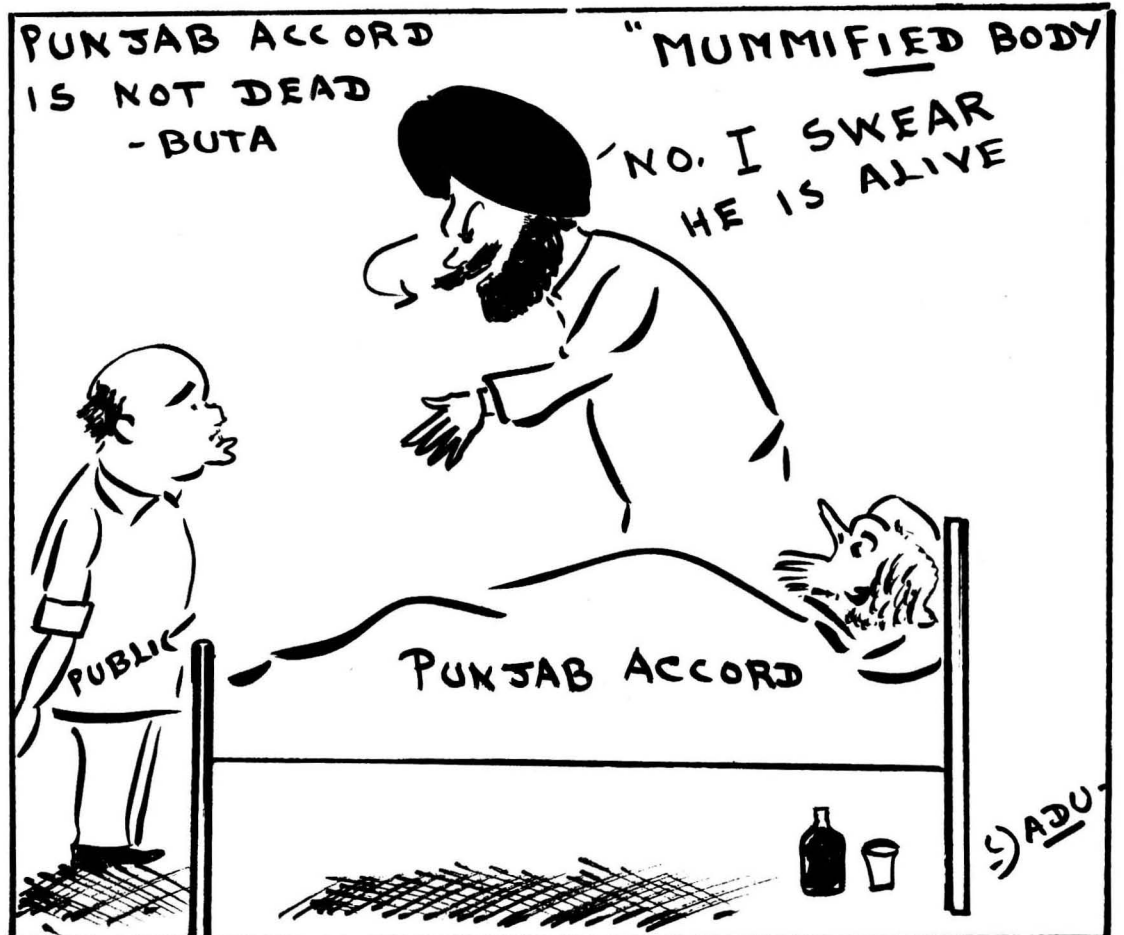
The truth of the matter is that the Sikhs who are dispersed all over the globe are going to take up this challenge to their democratic rights as well as the attempt to devalue the standing and the sanctity of the Akal Takhat. Whatever decisions are to be taken in regard to the affairs of the Sikhs must be taken openly and with the widest possible participation of the community.

Sant Nidhan Singh Kesar Memorial Award

Annual Sant Nidhan Singh Kesar Memorial awards instituted by S. Kuldip Singh and Sardarni Sawaran Kaur of Bangkok were presented to three prominent Punjabi writers in New Delhi on 17 October 1987.

Lt. Gen. J.S. Aurora (Retd.) gave away the awards to Gayani Ishar Singh Nara, Dr. Ajit Singh and S. Kuldip Singh Bagga for their outstanding contributions towards Punjabi literature.

The awards have been instituted to encourage Punjabi authors instituted to encourage Punjabi authors residing outside Punjab. The picture above shows Gen. Aurora presenting the award to S. Ishar Singh Nara. Standing on his right is S. Kuldip Singh of Bangkok.



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Politics and Pathology of Sati

Continued from page 16

the Joint Committee of Houses to examine the working of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961. Cases of cruelty by the husband and relatives of the husband which culminate in suicide by, or murder of, the hapless woman concerned, constitute only a small fraction of the cases. The Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act have to be amended suitably to deal effectively not only with cases of dowry but also cases of cruelty to married women by their in-laws."

The linkage between 'Sati' and 'Dowry' is not just religious. Karnataka reported 9 cases of dowry deaths in 1982, 31 cases in 1983 and 40 cases in 1984. Andhra Pradesh reported 14 cases in 1983, 27 cases in 1984 and 38 cases in 1985. For U.P. the figures are 182 in 1984, almost a double 323 for 1985 and 110 for the first four months of 1986. (These figures include death by burning and suicides). Madhya Pradesh reported 42 cases of dowry deaths in just five months—June to October, 1985. In Maharashtra there were 129 cases of dowry deaths in 1984 and here too the figures nearly doubled in 1985 i.e. 211 cases and the figures for the first 10 months (upto October, 1986) have already exceeded the figures for 1985 and are an all time high of 247 cases. In Maharashtra there were 411 suicides by young married women in 1983, 652 in 1985 and 662 for the first 10 months of 1986, against surpassing the total figure for 1985. The corresponding figures for Bombay are:—

48 in 1983, 64 in 1985, 68 till October, 1986.

With Sati temples all over Rajasthan the overflowing coffers of the Rajput Samaj by donations of over thirty lakhs of rupees for building a Sati Sthal i.e. a permanent temple in Roop Kanwar's memory has brought considerable prosperity to the villagers of Deorala and has become a lucrative source of business for shopkeepers and vendors.

Out lawed

Lord William Bentinck outlawed Sati in 1829 'to disassociate religious belief and practice from blood and murder'. He categorically declared in Regulation 17 of 1829 'After the promulgation of this regulation all persons convicted in aiding and abetting in the sacrifice of a Hindu Widow by burying and burying her alive whether the sacrifice be voluntary on her part or not shall be deemed guilty of culpable homicide and shall be liable to punishment by fine or imprisonment or both'. With the enactment of the Indian Penal Code in 1860 'Sati' was not defined as a separate offence. Those who instigated and participated in the crime were tried under Section 306 i.e. abetment of suicide. If any person commits suicide, he shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which

may extend to 10 years, and shall also be liable to fine'. Whoever attempted 'Sati' was tried under section 309. "Whoever attempts to commit suicide and does any act towards the commission of such offences shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year or with fine or with both". A forcible or coerced 'Sati' was tried as murder or culpable homicide under Section 299 and Section 300 of the Indian Penal Code.

"I can't do the parikrama now" (i.e. go around the Sathi Sthal). I explain to the persistent Rajput youth encircling me. I pick up the courage to say, 'I do not believe in Sati-Why can't women live?'—I know this is provocative but it is deliberate. As I feel them getting closer and more intimidating I proclaim—"I am a Hindu too-Can't I believe in non violence and humanity". Some one mockingly remarks 'let this disciple of Gandhi go.'

The Indian Penal Code was not found inadequate to deal with the offences pertaining to Sati. Two British Judges of the Allahabad High Court in 1914 in *Ram Dial vs. Emperor* enhanced in appeal the sentences imposed by the Sessions Court in spite of the 'able' arguments of Pandit Moti Lal Nehru (Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's great grandfather) who defended the accused, all of who were U.P. Brahmins (AIR 1914 Allahabad page 249). The facts of this case have significant bearing on the recent Deorala 'Sati' or Roop Kanwar. One Ram Lal, a Brahmin, died leaving a young widow Jai Devi, who announced her intention of committing 'Sati'. The accused who were her relatives tried to stop her. Before the Police could arrive, the Accused carried the corpse to the burning ghat and burnt the pyre under the order of the widow. They gave some ghee to this widow which she poured over the pyre and over herself. There was nothing to show who, lighted the fire. The court held the accused were guilty of abetting suicide. The Court refused to believe the plea of the accused that they were prevented from stopping her because she threatened to 'curse' them or 'the mircales invented' such as 'burning camphor in her two hands, how she smote an impudent girl into a fit with a glance of her eye and subsequently restored her to health and how she caused the rain to cease at about 9 A.M.". In enhancing the sentence from two to four years the Court remarked 'any relaxation in such a matter will result in the recurrence of the evil which took so many years to decrease to minimum. The feelings and beliefs which prompt a Sati still exist and a little encouragement would make many others act upon them'.

The Division Bench of the Rajasthan High Court in the case reported in AIR 1985 Rajasthan p. 169, where the

accused were members of the crowd who had joined the funeral procession, from the house of the deceased to the cremation ground, while the widow of the deceased was walking in front of the procession with an intention to commit Sati and they were shouting 'Sati-Mata-Ki-Jai' and as the procession proceeded about 100 or 150 of the crowd surrounded the police in order to make it impossible for them to prevent her from committing Sati/mand ultimately the

funeral pyre was set on fire with the widow sitting on Mt.

Thirty two years later the sentiment still persists in Rajasthan. Six Satis have occurred in Sikar District.

1. At Madoka Ragh, a Rajput woman committed Sati.
2. At Katsali Loharwas, a goldsmith's daughter committed Sati.
3. At Hathind Hardaskar Bagh, a Banla girl committed Sati.
4. At Taharli, a Rajput girl committed Sati.
5. At Malranda, a Rajput girl committed Sati.
6. At Gulpura Saral, and hour away from Neem Ka Thana is another Sati Site.

Three attempted Satis were folied in Rajasthan in 1981; On Bagdi village, the second in Devipura Village and the third in Rajnote village in Jaipur District. In all three cases large crowds of over twenty five thousands people were effectively dispersed by the police. Of three cases only one is pending, one has been closed and the accused reported as untraced. In the third, no case was registered in all.

On September 20 and 30, as a part of a fact finding team, a woman's delegation including the author visited Jaipur Nathu Singh, A Rajput B.J.P. M.L.A. in the Rajasthan Assembly and earlion an ex-Member of Parliament from Jaipur when questioned about the revival of this custom stated, 'Among the Rajputs, Society is everything the individual is nothing'. A Rajput industrialist and cement magnate confirmed that 'When the Rajput Sabha speaks, it is the voice of God'.

The Facts

In Rajasthan, the nine days beginning with the new moon in the month of September, the devout worship the trilogy of Hindu Goddesses, Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati all of whom were dependent spouse goddesses. Durga or Kali Mata is the reincarnation of Shiva's wife

Sati and Parvati. Accoaring to myth when Sati daughter of Sage Daksha married Shiva against Daksha's wishes and he failed to invite Shiva to a sacrifice he held, Sati threw herself into the sacrificial fire. These myths promote and endorse the dependence of women on their husbands, and seriously 'under mines their autonomy. Women instead of taking control of their lives feel powerless with the myths that they have internalised.

On entering the village of Deorala we were struck by its relative prosperity and neatness. The houses are made of cement and have an elegance and simplicity, but there is an air of an urban bazar in the several stalls that appears to have recently proliferated. The co-chief Mini-ster of Rajasthan, Mr. Bhairon Singh Shekhawat is to arrive shortly and we attributed the roads to his visit. There are scattered crowds in the open 'maidan' or field which is the centre of activity. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's belated denunciation of Sati three weeks after the incident and the threat of a new Ordinance and firm steps against the accused has not endeared visitors to the Youth in Deorala. I am shadowed wherever I walk. I do not disclose my identity but disclose my occupation. The maidan is breathing with life and death? I remain rooted, gazing at Rajput women in reds and orange do a 'Bhangra' or 'Garba' at Rajput outer circle, quite self-consciously but unthinkingly. In the inner circle young Rajput with coloured turbans and naked swords move anti-clockwise-entranced as both circles raise slogans—"Jabtak Suraj Chand Rahega Sati Roop Kanwar Tera Nam Rehega" around a cemented platform beneath a 'Chabuthra'. The immortalized 'Chunri' of red with gold embroidery hangs umply over a trishul. The incense coconuts, agarbathies are strewn around it. This is the Sathi Sthal where Roop Kanwar was immolated. The ritual is being hallowed—Roop Kanwar has been forgotten or relegated into the subconscious of their minds.

An eye witness to the Sati reported to the Chairman of the Municipality Shahpura that Roop Kanwar had been administered opium before she was taken to the funeral pyre. Did Roop Kanwar on seeing the dead body of her husband spontaneously say "Mujhe Sat Banana Hai"? Or did her in-laws say to her "Ab Tumhare Mall Nanhi, Sat Banana Tumbara Dharam Hai"? Was Roop Kanwar reassured of love and support by her mother-in-law or was she considered inauspicious and responsible for the death of Mall Singh? If in these circumstances, Roop Kanwar passively acquiesced, was her consent voluntary or coerced?

"I can't do the parikrama now" (i.e. go around the Sathi Sthal). I explain to the persistent Rajput youth encircling me. I pick up the courage to say, 'I do not believe in Sati-Why can't women

live?'—I know this is provocative but it is deliberate. As I feel them getting closer and more intimidating I proclaim—"I am a Hindu too-Can't I believe in non violence and humanity". Some one mockingly remarks 'let this disciple of Gandhi go.'

The Law

Mr. Sekul Singh Shekhawat, the District Congress (I) Youth President of Jhunjhuna has caught up with me—he is a young Rajput law graduate. He speaks with a fervour that makes me very uncomfortable. He points out that the Bombay High Court has accorded legal sanction to the right to die—he is referring to 1986 Bombay Law Reporter, (page 589) in the case of *Maruti Shripat Dubal vs. State of Haharashtra*. I do not enter into an academic debate, differ or dispute that the judgment does not approve of the right to murder or enslave women. He warns that the government has made terrorists of the Sikhs, the Rajputs were a proud martial race and would not take religious interference lightly. I ignore the dangerous implications of his remarks but seize it to ask why such a proud race did not save Roop Kanwar from dying. He submits that no human agency can interfere with the Sati which takes possession of a widow since she the Sati which takes possession of a widow since she can give a 'Shrap' or curse. He carries on mystified by this phenomenon and volunteers to take me to Triveni where Baladevi was prevented from committing Sati and how her curse had led to damnation and disaster. Before parting he tries to reassure me that Rajputs respect women—how they call them 'jee' like 'Anita jee'. What is the inner 'bhavana'? I try to probe—"Izzat" he replies promptly.

It is impossible to establish rapport with the women. They are being watched. The few I talk to are mute and evasive. Young school girls are more friendly and forthcoming about Roop Kanwar's Sati. She has entered into their impressionable minds as the ultimate role

model. In schools they are told that Sati is a glorious tradition to be emulated by Rajput women. They could not attend the Sati of Roop Kanwar because they were at school.

To be concluded

Politics and Pathology of Sati

On October 17 the Supreme Court Bar Association organised a Seminar on Sati Ms. Rani Jethmalani a Supreme Court Advocate presented a paper on Religion, Politics and law concerning Sati. We give here a write up from the same

In Shah Banu's case the Government succumbed to Muslim fundamentalism. In Roop Kanwar's case it succumbed to the politics of Hindu fundamentalism and the pressures of a powerful caste. In both cases these groups sought to legitimize their 'law' and delegitimise the law of the Constitution and the law of the land. It is needless to point out that all groups, namely, the Government, fundamentalists and the Rajput Samaj have been traditionally opposed to the emancipation of women and have preferred the status quo since change represents a threat to the authority of male oriented patriarchal and orthodox vested interests.

In Roop Kanwar's case the question is not who killed Roop Kanwar but who did not prevent the killing & Roop Kanwar. It is all the more poignant and painfully disturbing that in 'free' India with the enactment of the Constitution which guarantees Fundamental Rights to all persons, where the Directive Principles of State Policy clearly injunct the State to move towards the goals of an egalitarian society and which, with the inclusion of Article 51A by way of a Constitutional Amendment enjoins a fundamental duty on all citizens to develop a scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of reform—there is still a serious threat to the sanctity of the life of women.

With Sati temples all over Rajasthan the overflowing coffers of the Rajput Samaj by donations of over thirty lakhs of rupees for building a Sati Sthal i.e. a permanent temple in Roop Kanwar's memory has brought considerable prosperity to the villagers of Deorala and has become a lucrative source of business for shopkeepers and vendors.

The Rajputs, though not the largest group in Rajasthan wield enormous power as the people who have the guns, the muscle and the feudal authority. Traditionally they have never supported the Congress but with the low political profile of the Congress (I) and its sagging image no Government or political party would want to alienate a powerful political group. It is necessary to put the Deorala incident and the Sati of Roop Kanwar in this context.

The Murder

The murder, on 4th September, 1987, of the eighteen year old Roop Kanwar in the Deorala village of Sikar District of Rajasthan seven months after her marriage was an act of savagery of a whole society against the timid and meek. Pious euphemisms describing the immolation of a young widow on the pyre of her husband as a 'voluntary sati' only disguise the oppression suffered by widows in Rajput society. Where women have sub-consciously internalized cultural definitions of what they should be and have succumbed to the element of voluntariness.

In Sanskrit the word 'Sati' when literally translated means 'chaste woman'. The custom of immolating a widow on the funeral pyre of her husband possibly had links with the ancient belief that a man (not a woman) needed his companions in the after life as well as in this world. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica the hardship encountered by widows contributed to its spread. The larger incidence of Sati amongst the Brahmins of Bengal during 1680 to 1830 was due directly to the Dayabhaga system of law which prevailed in Bengal and which gave inheritance to widows. Re-marriage of widows was sanctioned in ancient Hindu Law and most sacred texts were certainly not well disposed towards the rite. Women are not believed to have practised Sati before 300 B.C. A woman could pass the rest of her life as a widow and if she was childless she could have a child through 'Niyoga' which was in vogue upto 500 B.C. Sati was never ordained as a religious practice.

In the later ages of Dharma Shashtra it is true that the lot of widows had become miserable. However, even Manu and Yajna Valkya did not enjoin Sati as obligatory on a widow. Shukra

then travels to the lowest strata of Hindu society. The statistics of Sati between 1815 to 1828 in Bengal are as follows:—

Year	No. of Statis
1815	378
1816	442
1817	707
1818	839
1819	650
1820	598
1821	654
1822	583
1823	575
1824	572
1826	639
1826	518
1827	517
1828	463

25% of Rajasthan widows also committed Sati. Next to Bengal, Rajasthan was very badly affected by this practice.

Compulsion and Escape

The cases of compulsion and escape and rescue of widow were common. The report of Walter Swert states as follows: "It is generally supposed that a Sati takes place with the free will and consent of the widow and that she frequently persists in her intention to burn in spite of the arguments and entreaties of her relatives. But there are

many reasons for thinking that such an event as "Voluntary Sutttee" very rarely occurs; few widows would think of sacrificing themselves unless overpowered by force or persuasion, very little of either being sufficient to overcome the physical or mental powers of the majority of Hindoo females."

In recent years the increasing proliferation of dowry related atrocities against women highlights the political insignificance of women and their surrender to insatiable greed. In 1983 the Criminal Law had to be amended and a new section 498-A to deal with cruelty against women was added which recognized the pervasive evils of dowry deaths. The Statement of objects and Reasons highlighted "the increasing number of dowry deaths is a matter of serious concern. The extent of the evil has been commented upon by

Continued on page 15

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